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Domestic Experiments  
and  
Other Plays

*UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.*

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**Polite Farces for the Drawing-  
Room.**

**By E. A. BENNETT.**

# Domestic Experiments

## And Other Plays

BY

I. E. M. AITKEN

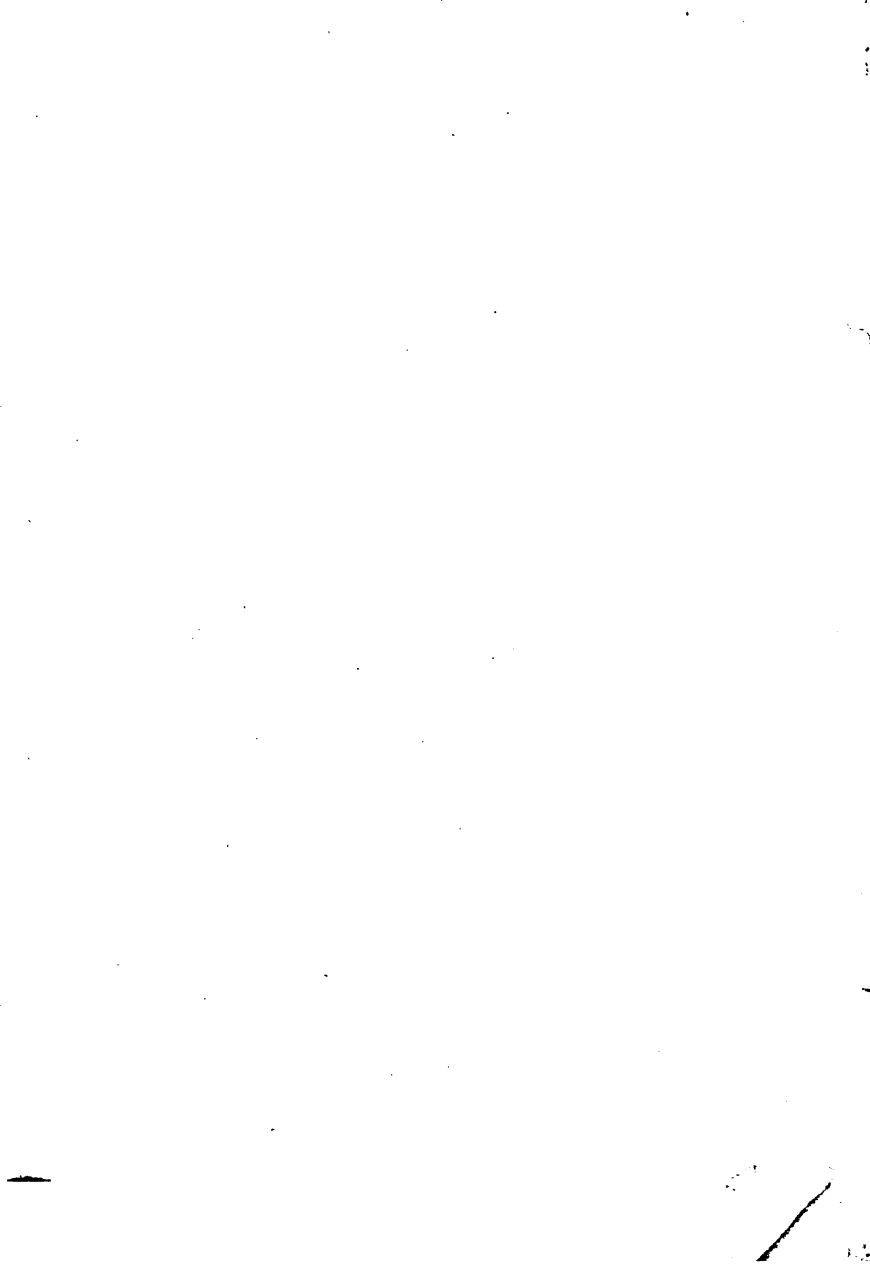


LONDON

LAMLEY AND CO.

1901

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## NOTE

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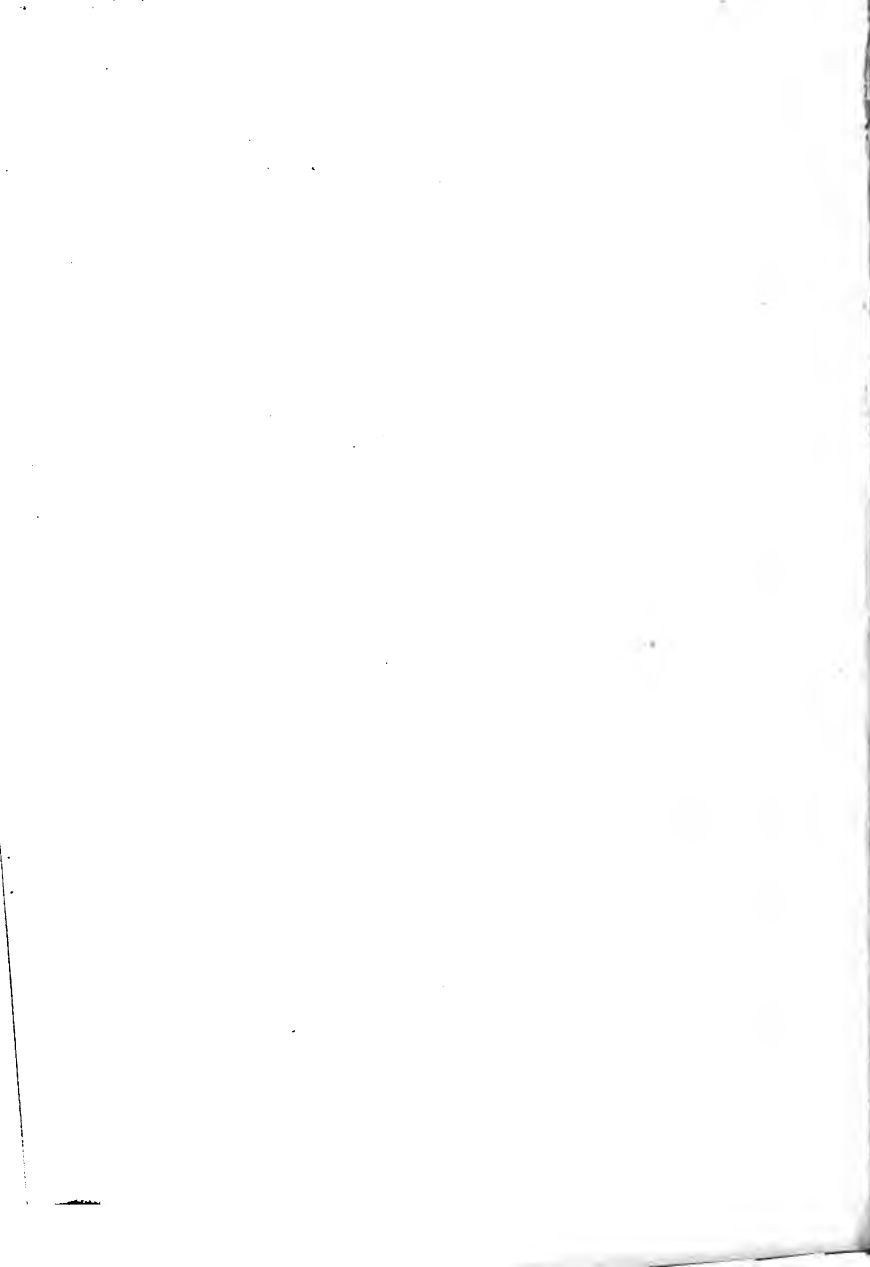
It is hoped that the following plays and dialogues may prove useful to amateurs, as the scene and setting of each is of the simplest description, and may be arranged either on a stage or in a drawing-room. In each case an ordinary drawing-room or boudoir with the usual furniture is all that is essential. The plays, with the exception of "Domestic Experiments," have appeared in a very much abridged form in *Black and White*, *Hearth and Home*, and *The Minute*, but they have all been considerably added to and adapted for acting purposes.



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# Domestic Experiments

## CHARACTERS

SIR JOSEPH FADDINGTON.

LORD STONEYBROKE.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK.

LADY FADDINGTON.

NINA (*her daughter*).

THE HONOURABLE GERALDINE FITZ-MAURICE.

MISS AGATHA ST. ORME.

SIR JOSEPH FADDINGTON must be a gentleman in the City with florid appearance and manners, grey whiskers. LORD STONEYBROKE and CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK slightly exaggerated manner of ordinary young men about town. Captain Kempton-Park as military as possible and very important; Lord Stoneybroke more natural and genial in manner. LADY FADDINGTON very pronounced manner and rather effusive; fashionably dressed—carries lorgnette, which she uses freely. NINA, light-coloured or white morning dress; at first hat and cape. GERALDINE, housemaid's dress, cap and apron; very self-confident and rather brusque manner. AGATHA, black or grey dress, black silk apron, and bow in hair, as lady's maid; *very* intense manner and voice.

## SCENE I

*[A drawing room. Lady Faddington at writing-table, R.C. ; Sir Joseph in an armchair reading, L.C. Tea-things on table. A piano and stool are supposed to be on stage at back, R., concealed by a screen.]*

LADY FADDINGTON

Joseph ?

SIR JOSEPH

My dear.

LADY FADDINGTON

You'd better dine at your club to-night.

SIR JOSEPH

Yes, my dear. Is this your Zenana Mission night, or the School Board ?

LADY FADDINGTON

Dear me, Joseph, how very forgetful you are ! Nina comes back to-day. I expect her at any moment, and the new staff of servants arriving. Oh, I hope they'll be satisfactory.

SIR JOSEPH

To be sure, to be sure ! A complete staff recruited from the aristocracy ; and a *nice* set they'll be !

LADY FADDINGTON

They can't possibly be worse than the last lot. What I suffered from the cook no one knows.

SIR JOSEPH

Ah ! let me see ! Was she a foundling or a Moravian ?

LADY FADDINGTON

Neither ; she was a Salvationist.

SIR JOSEPH

Of course, of course ! The foundling was the one before. I remember she had a surprising number of relations for a foundling.

LADY FADDINGTON

Abandoned creature ! I believe she joined the ballet at the Alhambra ultimately.

SIR JOSEPH

Yes, my dear, very natural. I'm sure I recollect seeing her practising her steps in the area while the footman played the accordion.

LADY FADDINGTON

Well, one thing is, our new servants won't dance the ballet in the area, thank goodness !

SIR JOSEPH

No, *they'll* do it in the drawing-room.  
[*with confidence*]

LADY FADDINGTON

Nonsense !



SIR JOSEPH

I thought some accomplishment was a *sine quâ non* of your advertisement?

LADY FADDINGTON

Yes, with a view to a weekly social evening here. The idea was suggested to me by an article of the Countess of Gaberlunzie's. I thought it so beautiful; each member of the household contributing their share to the general fund of mutual enjoyment.

SIR JOSEPH

Mutual practical jokes; that's what they'll contribute their share to, with all the latest developments of the average country house up-to-date. (*Lady Faddington — Absurd!*) Booby-traps in the hall, apple-pies in the bedrooms, thorough discomfort everywhere. I must say I don't care for a wet sponge in my bed.

LADY FADDINGTON

And I don't care for a *wet blanket* in my drawing-room. [*decisively*]

SIR JOSEPH

Well, I must be off to the club.

LADY FADDINGTON

Be sure you come back for the social evening about nine.

SIR JOSEPH

[*at door*] Social evening? To-night?



it? Will you have tea? Has your luggage been brought in?

NINA

[*incoherently*] No, thanks; yes, it's in; I had it on the way. Mamma, I met papa at the door, and he tells me you've changed all the servants since I've been away, and there's only Mrs. Nobbs in the house, and *she's* just leaving, and she says what the new ones will be like *she* doesn't know.

LADY FADDINGTON

Mrs. Nobbs is too fond of gossip, I fear—a great pity, for she is otherwise an excellent charwoman, and thoroughly trustworthy. But it's quite true they're all gone.

NINA

[*at tea*] Oh, mamma, and you *never* wrote and told me!

[*Nina goes up stage and takes off cape and hat; comes back.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

My dear, I didn't want to bother you, but the fact is they became insupportable, especially the cook, who, it seems, was a Salvationist. I should never have engaged her had I known, and when it came to her preaching in the Square garden every Tuesday and Friday I couldn't possibly keep her any longer.

NINA

[*sits down*] I always told you you'd have to get rid of her. But what about the others?

LADY FADDINGTON

Emma, the housemaid, gave notice because she had to cook the dinner once while cook was preaching; and Thomas, it seems, was engaged to them both, so, of course, he wouldn't stay when *they* went.

NINA

But Simkins, your maid, what's become of *her*? She can't have been engaged to Thomas, too!

LADY FADDINGTON

Simkins has become a missionary.

NINA

Good gracious! where?

LADY FADDINGTON

I really don't remember at this moment. Stay—I think somewhere in China.

NINA

What could ever have made her think of such a thing?

LADY FADDINGTON

I can't imagine. She had a "call," whatever that may be.

NINA

I shouldn't have thought a "call" would have affected her much. She never used to come when one *rang*.

LADY FADDINGTON

So I made up my mind to try quite a new experiment, and I advertised for lady and gentleman helps instead of servants ; members of the aristocracy preferred. I had heaps of answers. [*points to table*]

NINA

Oh, how could you be so rash?

LADY FADDINGTON

Rash ! It was an inspiration ! As the " masses " were a failure I thought I'd try the " classes. " They'll be here directly.

NINA

Who ?

LADY FADDINGTON

Our new staff of servants—a cook, footman, housemaid, and lady's maid. I had so many answers that I took quite a long time to decide which to engage, but I think I may say I have made a wise selection.

NINA

Whom have you engaged ?

LADY FADDINGTON

The cook I have selected [*takes up letter and reads*] is Lord Stoneybroke, who, I think, will suit us exactly. He has just come from Klondyke, where he had to cook everything and anything.

NINA

A man !

LADY FADDINGTON

Yes. I feel certain he will do, for he says [*consults letter*] he has been accustomed to exercise the strictest economy in cooking.

NINA

So I should imagine.

LADY FADDINGTON

His name was, of course, a difficulty, but he saw it at once, and suggested that he should be called "Narcisse," as men cooks are generally French. I can't get a kitchen-maid anywhere [*still reading letter*]; the most unsuitable people applied, but Lord Stoney-broke thinks he will be able to manage without one at first. So nice of him.

NINA

Most accommodating !

LADY FADDINGTON

He can make *entrées*, and sings tenor.

NINA

Sings tenor ! What *has* that to do with cooking ?

LADY FADDINGTON

I have arranged to have household social evenings once a week, and mentioned in the advertisement that any accomplishment would be of advantage.

NINA

I have never heard of anything so ridiculous ! Well, what about the others ? Who is Thomas' successor ?

LADY FADDINGTON

Captain Kempton-Park. He was in some hussar regiment [*looks at letter*—I forget which—but has recently left the army for [*consulting letter*] pecuniary reasons. He particularly asks if there will be room to practise Sandow's exercises. Another man answered the advertisement who had been in the Guards, but he wanted to bring two dogs, one a mastiff, so I decided on this man.

NINA

I should have thought that a disciple of Sandow would have been more at home in a porter's place.

LADY FADDINGTON

An active young man is always useful about the house. I am going to call him "William," as his military title would of course be rather unusual, and I couldn't bear the name of "Thomas" after the last ; deceitful wretch, engaged to two of them indeed ! Not that I would have minded that so much if he hadn't gone off without giving even a week's notice.

NINA

That was the last straw. Who are the ladies ?

LADY FADDINGTON

The housemaid is the Hon. Geraldine Fitz-Maurice. She writes so nicely and un-

affectedly [*finds letter*]. Let me see ; oh, here it is ! She says though she has had *practically* no experience, she is sure she can do the work, as she has twice cleaned her own bicycle and got nearly all the mud off. I suggested that as her name was rather unsuitable for a housemaid we should call her "Sarah" ; she made no objection. She skirt dances by the by.

NINA

Oh, does she ? That will be a *great* advantage.

LADY FADDINGTON

Then there is our new lady's maid. A great many people applied, but I think I have made a wise choice. Miss St. Orme, a clergyman's daughter. She plays the harmonium and recites [*refers to letter*]. She describes herself as well educated. I have arranged to call her "Pinner."

NINA

St. Orme ? I was at school with a girl called Agatha St. Orme.

LADY FADDINGTON

No doubt the same. Very nice for you, Nina, to renew your acquaintance.

NINA

*Nice ?* Do you think it will give me any pleasure to meet an old schoolfellow in a menial position in my father's house ?



LADY FADDINGTON

My dear child, you exaggerate so ! Miss St. Orme from her letter seems a most superior girl, and will no doubt be extremely successful in her duties.

NINA

[*aside*] Poor dear Agatha could hardly do her own hair at school far less any one else's. [*aloud*] The situation is most distressing to me. [*crosses stage*]

LADY FADDINGTON

The situation is a remarkably good one—  
£30 a year and *everything found*!

NINA

Oh, it's dreadful to think of !—dreadful !

*Enter Agatha St. Orme, R., dressed as lady's maid.*

AGATHA

Lady Faddington, I believe. I did not know, I wasn't quite sure—— [*catching sight of Nina*] Nina !

NINA

Agatha ! [*they embrace*]

LADY FADDINGTON

My daughter tells me, Miss St. Orme, that you are old schoolfellows.

AGATHA

Yes, we were together at Madame du Clos' at Brussels.

LADY FADDINGTON

Quite an unexpected pleasure for both of you.

AGATHA

I recognised the name but didn't know if it was the same.

NINA

You wouldn't, of course ; papa was only knighted last Jubilee.

LADY FADDINGTON

Nina !

*Enter Lord Stoneybroke, R., dressed as cook.*

*[Nina starts.]*

LADY FADDINGTON

Ah, Lord Stoneybroke, delighted to see you, especially as we've only had a char-woman for the last three days, and have been living on tinned meats and biscuits. Let me introduce you to my daughter *[indicates Nina, who bows slightly]*. Miss St. Orme, our new lady's maid. *[Lord Stoneybroke bows to both]*

LORD STONEYBROKE

I think I have had the pleasure of meeting Miss Faddington before *[advances]*.

*Nina, C., Agatha, L., Lord Stoneybroke, R.C., Lady Faddington, R.*

LADY FADDINGTON

Really ! I had no idea. Nina, you never mentioned it.

NINA

I never had the pleasure of meeting *Lord Stoneybroke* before.

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*bows*] My mistake, of course.

*Lady Faddington and Lord Stoneybroke, B.R.,  
Nina and Agatha, L.C.*

AGATHA

[*aside*] What is it, Nina? Why did you snub him? Who is he?

NINA

I'll tell you afterwards. Don't take any notice. Wait till we're alone.

*Enter Geraldine Fitz-Maurice, dressed as  
housemaid.*

LADY FADDINGTON

How d' you do, Miss Fitz-Maurice? So glad you could come so early. My daughter — Miss St. Orme, our new lady's maid.

GERALDINE

How d' you do? [*catches sight of Lord Stoneybroke*] Why, there's Bertie Stoneybroke! Who'd have thought of seeing you here?

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*across table*] How d' you do. [*aside*] Now which of the three Fitz-Maurice girls is that? I never know one from the other.

GERALDINE

I thought you had gone to Fashoda.

LORD STONEYBROKE

Klondyke.

GERALDINE

How very odd you look got up like that !  
That's where the gold comes from, isn't it ?  
[*looks through eyeglass*]

LADY FADDINGTON

Lord Stoneybroke is our new cook.

GERALDINE

Really ? how awfully funny ! [*sits down*]

[*Lord Stoneybroke, Geraldine, and Lady Faddington sit R.C., Nina and Agatha on sofa L.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

I think I had the pleasure of meeting a sister of yours, Miss Fitz-Maurice, last year at Homburg—Lady Clancoke. I read a most interesting article of hers in the *Twentieth Century* last week on Foreign Competition in Trade. So thoughtfully expressed. I suppose she takes a deep interest in all social questions.

GERALDINE

Oh, yes, rather. You see, she's got a hat shop in Bond Street, so she's naturally keen about it. Trade's awfully slack just now.

LADY FADDINGTON

Oh, yes, how distressing ! I——

*Enter Captain Kempton-Park, dressed as footman, single eyeglass in eye.*

LADY FADDINGTON

[*advancing*] Captain Kempton - Park, charmed to see you. My daughter [*introducing*], Miss St. Orme, Miss Fitz-Maurice, Lord Stoneybroke.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

[*bows to each*] [*to Lord Stoneybroke*] I think I met a brother of yours in Burmah in '97. He was on the staff ; rather a good shot.

LORD STONEYBROKE

Yes ; he's in Egypt now. [*they talk aside*]

LADY FADDINGTON

I'm sure we shall be a most united party.

*Enter Sir Joseph, R.*

SIR JOSEPH

My dear, I forgot to say that I may be rather late to-night.

LADY FADDINGTON

My husband, Sir Joseph Faddington—Miss FitzMaurice, Miss St. Orme—an old schoolfellow of Nina's by the by—Lord Stoneybroke, Captain Kempton-Park.

[*Sir Joseph bows to company collectively. Crosses to L. Sits down by Agatha.*]

SIR JOSEPH

Do you—ah—know London well, Miss St. Orme ? [*aside*] Handsome girl—very.

AGATHA

[*earnestly*] Oh no! hardly at all. We live quite in the country, near Dorking.

SIR JOSEPH

Happy, happy Dorking! And so you've come forth from your Arcadian retreat to illumine Society?

AGATHA

Oh, Sir Joseph, you forget I'm in service!

SIR JOSEPH

*In service perhaps, but ah, how out of place!*

AGATHA

Oh, Sir Joseph!

LADY FADDINGTON

Ahem! Now I think, as it is getting late, I will show you your new quarters, as I want you all to feel at home as soon as possible.

CHORUS OF VOICES

Oh, thank you, Lady Faddington.

[*Exit Lady Faddington, followed by Geraldine, Stoneybroke, and Captain Kempton-Park. Nina keeps Agatha back.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

[*at door*] If you're going to *walk* to your club, Joseph, you ought to be starting.

SIR JOSEPH

My dear, I've changed my mind. I'll dine at home. The air is rather chilly coming back at night; unusually so for the time of

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year. *Au revoir*, Miss St. Orme, till this evening. [*aside*] Most attractive girl!

[*Exit R.*]

NINA

Now let's have a comfortable talk [*lies back on sofa and pulls Agatha down beside her*], but we must be quick before mamma comes back to initiate you into your new duties.

AGATHA

Yes, yes; but first tell me why you behaved in that extraordinary way to poor Lord Stoneybroke. [*comes down*] I'm dying to hear all about it.

NINA

There's very little to tell, and I hate going over it.

AGATHA

You may trust me like the grave.

NINA

Well, the winter before last I was at Pontresina with an aunt who was rather an invalid, so I was naturally left a good deal to myself. There was a Mr. Gilbert Brooke staying in the hotel who seemed to admire me, and was——

AGATHA

Yes?

NINA

Very attentive, and every one talked about

it, as people always do, and then one day, when every one was expecting the usual climax, he—oh ! it's humiliating to think of.

AGATHA

Go on, dear ; you'll feel better when you've told me exactly what you think of *him*.

NINA

He went off without a word—without a line ; leaving no address—not that I wanted it, of course.

AGATHA

How very mysterious !

NINA

I never heard of him again from that day to this, when what was my surprise to meet him face to face in this room, masquerading as a French cook, and calling himself Lord Stoneybroke.

AGATHA

Oh, Nina, I see it all. He has followed you here on purpose. How delightfully original !

NINA

I call it extremely impertinent.

AGATHA

[*sighing*] Of course he will explain matters, and you will marry him, and the worst of it is a psychological problem will come to a happy but inartistic ending.



NINA

I shall do nothing of the kind. [*crosses*]  
I shan't speak to him. But tell me about yourself. What made you think of doing this? I thought when you left school you got a scholarship and went to Girton.

AGATHA

Yes, I was three years at Girton—such a joyous three years!

NINA

Oh, well, there's no accounting for tastes.  
But what did you do when you left college?

AGATHA

I started as a classical coach. I took a classical tripos, you know, but I found teaching most distasteful. Study is my delight, but a sympathetic atmosphere is absolutely necessary to me, so when I saw the advertisement in the *Morning Post* I thought the place would just suit me—a refined and sheltered home, harmonious surroundings, and time to study my favourite authors. I've brought them all with me.

NINA

Oh, who are your favourite authors?

AGATHA

Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Omar Khayyám, and many, many others.

NINA

I'm afraid you won't have much time for

reading Maeterlinck and Ibsen here. By the way, can you do hair? [*gets up*]

AGATHA

I don't know. I never tried [*gets up*]

NINA

And mend clothes and darn stockings?

AGATHA

[*helplessly*] I don't know. Shall I have to do all that?

NINA

Indeed you will, and a great deal more. Come, I'd better give you a lesson on the spot on your duties as a lady's maid, so that you can tackle mamma.

NINA

Oh do, Nina.

[*Nina, song, "Lady's Maid," from "San Toy."*]

[*Exeunt at end of song, Nina followed by Agatha.*]

*Enter Captain Kempton-Park with tray. He looks about vaguely for tea-things; he also carries dumbbells. Deposits tray.*

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

[*advancing with dumbbells*] Very close quarters downstairs—not room enough to swing a cat in. This seems a nice quiet place, not likely to be disturbed. Wonder

if I've time to practise a bit ? [*practises with dumbbells*]

*Enter Geraldine with duster. She flicks him with it to make him turn round.*

GERALDINE

I say, how d' you light a fire ? I've been dusting the library, and it's gone out.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

What ! the library ?

GERALDINE

No, the fire.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

[*with inspiration*] Try matches. Got a box ?

GERALDINE

My good man, I've used three boxes !  
There ! [*producing three empty boxes*]

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Great Scott ! [*examines them through eye-glass*]

GERALDINE

There seems to be something materially antagonistic between matches and wood. They're not sympathetic.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Don't seem to "gee" somehow, do they ?  
Look here, d' you happen to know by any chance what I'm supposed to do with this little lot ? [*indicates trays and cups*]

GERALDINE

Why, of course, you must take them to the scullery or pantry, or somewhere, and wash them.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

[*looks at them through eyeglass*] Wash them! What with?

GERALDINE

Oh, I don't know; soap, I should think.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Oh, come, not *soap*! You don't get at me like that. It ought to be *starch*.

GERALDINE

Oh, well, it doesn't matter which.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

This is a rum sort of billet to find oneself in, isn't it? Awful hard work.

GERALDINE

*You* don't seem to do much, any way.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Oh, I like that! Just you try my part of the show.

GERALDINE

Thanks, I wouldn't deprive you of it for worlds. [*sits on table, arms akimbo, duster at belt*]

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

[*looking through eyeglass*] I say, Miss Fitz-Maurice, you really make an awfully smart housemaid—to look at, I mean.

GERALDINE

[*sarcastically*] How quite too good of you to say so !

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Yes, you remind me of that girl who sang "Mary was a Housemaid" in "Pot-Pourri." Ripping song, tremendous success. I bought it at once.

GERALDINE

Oh, I know that song. I sang it at a people's concert in Whitechapel the other day. They liked it awfully.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Do let's try it over now. We might work it in at one of those social evenings Lady Faddington's so keen about.

GERALDINE

[*gets off table*] All right, I'll sing it and you do the chorus.

[*Geraldine, c. ; Captain Kempton-Park, L.*]

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

No, I'll sing it, and *you*—— Look here, why shouldn't we *both* sing it as a duet ?

GERALDINE

Can you sing second ?

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

No ; can you ?

GERALDINE

Certainly not ; and I wouldn't if I could.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Neither would I. [*a slight pause*]

GERALDINE

Under the circumstances, Captain Park, I don't see how we're to sing it as a duet.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

I tell you what, we'll sing alternate lines, like the "Johnnies" at the Gaiety. [*fixes eyeglass*]

GERALDINE

All right, you begin.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Oh, yes, I'll begin.

[*Song, "Mary was a Housemaid," four verses with appropriate action. At end of last verse enter Lady Faddington and Nina, L., and discovers Captain Kempton-Park on knee, R.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

Miss Fitz-Maurice ! Captain Kempton-Park !

[*Captain Kempton-Park gets up.*]

GERALDINE

Oh, Lady Faddington, we're rehearsing.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

For your social evening, you know. Rather a good song. It's called "Mary was a Housemaid."

LADY FADDINGTON

Oh, a very charming song, I'm sure—

quite ; but I'm afraid I must ask you to favour us with something a little less realistic ; something more elevated, of a higher grade. You will oblige me, I am sure.

GERALDINE AND CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Oh, certainly, Lady Faddington.

[*Exit Captain Kempton-Park.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

[*regaining confidence*] Thank you so much. I must ask you, Miss Fitz-Maurice, to resume your duties—that is, Sarah, the bedrooms have not yet been done out.

GERALDINE

Yes, m'lady.

[*Exit R.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

Dear me, dear me, I do trust this domestic experiment is going to turn out well. I don't quite know ; they all seem so very, so very high-spirited. Of course one can't ask for a *character* from any of the upper classes. That would be expecting *too* much.

NINA

[*sits R.*] You can hardly be surprised if they don't do their work properly, as they know absolutely nothing about it.

LADY FADDINGTON

[*walking about room*] My dear child, they will very quickly adapt themselves to their surroundings ; blood *always* tells ; and I'm

sure it's very commendable in all these young people, reared as they have been in luxury, accustomed, no doubt, to have their slightest wish gratified, to undauntedly start forth to earn their own living. Think of their courage, their determination, their self-confidence. Isn't it marvellous? [*stops and faces Nina*]

NINA

*Quite* marvellous; especially their self-confidence. But surely Miss Fitz-Maurice and Captain Kempton-Park would have found their vocation at a music-hall better than in domestic service. They would have so much more scope for their talents.

LADY FADDINGTON

Ah! yes, that song was a little unconventional, no doubt. Still one must not be censorious. What are we that we should judge others? At all events, Lord Stoneybroke—I mean Narcisse—seems a most steady young man, and so earnest about his profession—quite a treasure.

NINA

I'm sure he isn't a bit better than the rest. He probably looks on the whole thing as a joke at somebody else's expense.

LADY FADDINGTON

How can you be so uncharitable, Nina! Lord Stoneybroke is a most delightful young



man, such charming manners, so frank and unaffected.

NINA

Oh, very.

*Enter Lord Stoneybroke with large wooden spoon in his hand.*

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*waving spoon to emphasise his remarks*]  
Oh, I say, Lady Faddington, I've been looking for you everywhere. There isn't any curry-powder in the kitchen. You see, I was going to make a curry for dinner, but I can't find it anywhere, and now I don't know what to do instead except an omelette and a salad.

LADY FADDINGTON

An omelette and a salad will be excellent, Lord Stoneybroke — Narcisse — as supplement to something more substantial, of course.

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*sits on edge of sofa*] That's just it, there won't be anything more substantial. You see, there *was* some cold meat, but I used it for the curry, and while I was looking for the curry-powder somehow it didn't turn out as well as it ought to have done.

LADY FADDINGTON

Really! I——

LORD STONEYBROKE

The soup's all right, and so 's the savoury—  
anchovy on toast. I've had to use rather a  
lot of eggs, as four broke.

LADY FADDINGTON

You had better send out at once for some  
cutlets.

LORD STONEYBROKE

But there's no one to send. You see, not  
having a kitchenmaid makes this sort of  
thing so complicated, don't you know.

NINA

Of course you always had a kitchenmaid  
at Klondyke!

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*with dignity*] Oh, Klondyke was quite  
different. I hope I know my duty better  
than to serve up a dinner in Lady Fad-  
dington's house like the ones we had at  
Klondyke. [*doubtfully*] I *might* make the  
curry into a hash.

NINA

[*aside*] I should think you've done that  
already.

LADY FADDINGTON

I'm sure you will do your best, Lord  
Stoneybroke, and that reminds me of some-  
thing I wanted to say to you. [*earnestly*] I  
do hope you will try to influence the others  
by your example. I always think a cook's  
is such a responsible position.

LORD STONEYBROKE

Yes, by Jove! I felt that myself when those eggs came to grief.

LADY FADDINGTON

Some of our circle are *very* young and inexperienced; they will naturally look to you for help, which I am sure——

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*in alarm*] Lady Faddington, I took this situation on the distinct understanding that I wasn't expected to answer any bells or sweep out the hall. I'm awfully sorry, but I can't possibly do any one else's work as well as my own.

LADY FADDINGTON

You misunderstand me, Lord Stoneybroke. The assistance I referred to is of a *moral* nature.

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*bows*] In that case, of course, Lady Faddington, you may rely on me.

LADY FADDINGTON

I was quite sure of that. Dear me [*looks at clock*], it is past seven. I hope to see you at our little homely gathering this evening, which will be, I trust, a source of mutual benefit and harmless recreation. [*goes to door*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

Thanks awfully; charmed, I'm sure.

LADY FADDINGTON

[*at door*] Nina, we will not dress to-night, as Miss St. Orme—I mean Pinner—has not put out my evening gown.

[*Exit L., Nina follows slowly.*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

Miss Faddington—Nina—I must speak to you. [*following her*]

NINA

[*turns at L. exit*] I should have thought that quite unnecessary, Lord Stoneybroke [*stands L.C.*], *alias* Mr. Brooke, *alias* Narcisse.

LORD STONEYBROKE

Oh, don't talk like that ; you don't understand.

NINA

[*comes back towards c. slowly*] Perfectly. I don't know whether to congratulate you most upon the number and variety of your assumed characters, or the ease with which you adapt yourself to each.

LORD STONEYBROKE

I don't think you're quite fair to me, Nina.

NINA

*Miss Faddington!* You forget that you're only a servant to-day. Next week you will probably pose in some new *rôle* with equal success.

LORD STONEYBROKE

You're awfully down on me—more than I

deserve if you only knew ; but never mind that now ; I want to tell you about a Johnny I knew.

NINA

Really, Lord Stoneybroke, this cannot possibly concern me.

LORD STONEYBROKE

Please listen. He met a girl once traveling abroad. [*Nina sits down*]

NINA

[*indifferently*] Did he ?

LORA STONEYBROKE

He rather admired her—that is, awfully.

NINA

How *very* kind of him !

LORD STONEYBROKE

And—and—so—one way and another he saw a good deal of her.

NINA

[*sarcastically*] That must have been delightful for *her*.

LORD STONEYBROKE

In fact he got rather keen, don't you know.

NINA

Really ? Quite a romance. Well, what happened ?

LORD STONEYBROKE

Oh, nothing *happened* exactly. He "never told his love." [*melodramatically*]

NINA

Oh, I do so dislike that type of man. [*turns away*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*follows her*] He couldn't say anything just then.

NINA

And, pray, why not?

LORD STONEYBROKE

Circumstances over which he had no control—very reduced circumstances, by the way—made it impossible at the time.

NINA

Oh, indeed! I should have thought *she* might have been the best judge of that.

LORD STONEYBROKE

And any way, he wasn't sure if she really liked him.

NINA

Oh, I don't suppose she did for a moment.

LORD STONEYBROKE

So he went away.

NINA

That was very conventional of him, quite hackneyed, in fact.

LORD STONEYBROKE

Sometimes the conventional is the only thing left to do—at the time. [*slight pause*]

NINA

I fail to see the connection of all this

with your present position in my father's house.

LORD STONEYBROKE

When tactics fail strategy has a look in.

NINA

In what way?

LORD STONEYBROKE

When a chap doesn't see his way to getting what he wants, why, he has to mark-time a bit.

NINA

I had no idea that you had been in the army, among your many *professions*.

LORD STONEYBROKE

The militia, before I went abroad.

NINA

Oh, ages ago. [*gets up*] I've been so interested in your friend's story, which I'm sure is most thrilling, though, perhaps, rather pointless. [*pause*] However, I won't detain you from your duties. It must be nearly dinner-time. [*rises*]

[*Lord Stoneybroke fidgets and looks at carpet.*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*rises and comes nearer*] Don't go. Dinner won't be ready for ages; in fact, you can't have it till I choose.

NINA

[*turns away again*] Really, Lord Stoneybroke!

LORD STONEYBROKE

You must know *why* I'm here.

NINA

I haven't the faintest idea.

LORD STONEYBROKE

I've something to tell you. Of course you know it already.

NINA

[*aside*] At last ! I thought he'd never say it. [*aloud*] I ~~can't~~ think what you mean. [*crosses stage to L.*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*coming after her*] I've spoken too soon ; I ought to have waited.

NINA

Waited ! [*turns and faces audience*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*retreating backwards, carrying spoon*] We'll discuss it another time.

NINA

[*firmly*] No, we won't do anything of the kind. Painful as it is to me, I will nerve myself to hear you. Go on.

LORD STONEYBROKE

I—I——

NINA

Go on.

LORD STONEYBROKE

Yes, yes, of course, I—you—it was all rot about that chap, you know. There wasn't



one, really — that is, it was you—I mean me.

NINA

Your language seems a little obscure.

LORD STONEYBROKE

I'm not putting it clearly, but what I mean to say is this— [*with effort*]

NINA

Yes?

LORD STONEYBROKE

I went away last year because I was getting too keen. I daresay you thought it odd at the time.

NINA

Oh, not in the least.

LORD STONEYBROKE

But it wasn't any good just then. That's why I went to Klondyke, and that's why I'm here now.

NINA

Is it? Why?

LORD STONEYBROKE

I made a little bit out there—not much, but something.

NINA

Oh, really!

LORD STONEYBROKE

And when I got back I didn't know how to see you, so when Lady Faddington's advertisement came out it seemed to make it all right.

NINA

Why didn't you write?

LORD STONEYBROKE

Well, you see, it's rather awkward to explain by letter that one has been playing about under another name. Besides, I thought you might have found it out and been annoyed.

NINA

How very absurd!

LORD STONEYBROKE

However, it's all right now, isn't it? [*comes up to her*]

NINA

I suppose so. [*he puts his arm round her*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

I'd better speak to Lady Faddington about it, hadn't I?

NINA

On no account. She wouldn't hear of it. She knows you're poor.

LORD STONEYBROKE

But what's to be done, then?

NINA

Ask papa; he's much more easily managed.

LORD STONEYBROKE

Ask papa? [*doubtfully*]

[*Duet, "Ask Papa," from "Messenger Boy," or any other serio-comic duet.*]

CURTAIN. INTERVAL OF FIVE MINUTES.

## SCENE II

[*Drawing-room as before, corner of piano partially seen L. Sir Joseph with paper; Nina and Lady Faddington working. Table R.C.*]

SIR JOSEPH

[*looking up*] I must ask you, Sophia, to speak to the cook. The dinner was execrable.

NINA

Oh, papa!

LADY FADDINGTON

Of course *to-night* being the first *day*, everything was a little disorganised. To-morrow things will be very different.

NINA

*I think the salad was excellent.*

SIR JOSEPH

You can't dine off salad, and surely it is rather unconventional for a footman to explain Sandow's Handbook with practical illustrations all the time he's waiting on you.

LADY FADDINGTON

Oh, not *all* the time, Joseph.

SIR JOSEPH

No, he occasionally varied his remarks by giving me unsolicited tips for—[*Lady Faddington rings twice*] What are you ringing for, Sophia?

NINA

Oh, mamma, what are you going to say to Agatha ?

*Enter Agatha with book.*

AGATHA

You rang for me, Lady Faddington.

LADY FADDINGTON

Yes ; I thought I would take this opportunity of mentioning to you, Miss St Orme, that I expect my dressing-gown put out before ten o'clock. Also that another time both my dinner-dress and my daughter's must be laid out before dinner, and that you must be ready to assist us.

AGATHA

Yes, Lady Faddington—I mean, m' lady.

SIR JOSEPH

May I ask, Miss St Orme, what is the volume you have with you ?

AGATHA

Oh, such a delightful work—a great favourite of mine—"The Epic of Hades."  
[*showing it*]

SIR JOSEPH

[*looking at it*] "The Epic of Hades!"  
My dear young lady !

LADY FADDINGTON

I will now ring for the rest of the household. [*rings bell*] I am looking forward

with much pleasure to an enjoyable and, at the same time, an improving evening.

*Enter Stoneybroke with music, still in cook's dress.*

LADY FADDINGTON

Glad to see you are punctual, Lord Stoneybroke. Where are the others?

LORD STONEYBROKE

Oh, Miss Fitz-Maurice and Kempton-Park are having a heated argument as to who is, or rather who is *not*, to clean the silver, and further whether it's to be done with "Monkey Brand" or "Pears'."

LADY FADDINGTON

"Monkey Brand!" "Pears'!" Oh, this will never do! [*gets up*]

*Enter Geraldine, carrying properties to be used in song.*

LADY FADDINGTON

Where is William?

GERALDINE

William?—oh, Captain Park; he's dressing up for his song.

[*Nina and Stoneybroke talk aside.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

[*horrified*] Dressing up!

GERALDINE

[*coming down stage*] Yes, in fancy dress. He hasn't cleaned the knives. I don't know who he expects to do it. I've told him I'm not going to.

LADY FADDINGTON

I think we must defer the discussion to a more fitting occasion.

*Enter Captain Kempton-Park in costume ; any costume such as a coster, Chinese, or military, &c.*

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Awfully sorry I'm late. Couldn't find my pigtail. Hope you didn't wait. Afraid I've delayed things a bit.

NINA

Not at all, Captain Park ; as you've been good enough to change your costume, won't you sing us something in character ?

LADY FADDINGTON

I hope you will be so kind, Captain Park.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Oh, yes, delighted, if some one will play my accompaniment.

NINA AND GERALDINE

I'm afraid I can't read at sight.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Miss St Orme, may I trouble you ?

AGATHA

I shall be most happy to do my best.

*[Goes to piano. Captain Kempton-Park gives directions as to accompaniment. Sir Joseph follows and sits by piano as if to turn over.]*

SIR JOSEPH

Allow me to turn over for you.

LADY FADDINGTON

Joseph, there is a draught by the piano.  
Remember your lumbago.

SIR JOSEPH

Yes, my dear, one can't be too careful.  
*[fetches small screen and puts it round piano]*  
There, I think that's better.

AGATHA

Are you ready?

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Righto !

*[Captain Kempton-Park, song with chorus.  
Any popular song appropriate to the costume worn.]*

ALL

Thanks, so much.

LORD STONEYBROKE

Ripping good song, capitally sung.

LADY FADDINGTON

*So much obliged*, such a very stirring air.  
Perhaps Miss St Orme will now recite something.

AGATHA

With pleasure, Lady Faddington. Do you know I'm so fond of it?

[*Agatha, recitation ; burlesque melodrama, such as one of Anstey's " Filial Little Frank."*]

[*Great applause.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

How pathetic ! really quite affecting.  
[*Agatha returns to piano*] Now, Miss Fitz-Maurice, I hope you are going to contribute something.

GERALDINE

[*If preferred Geraldine can wear a dancing-skirt*] Oh, yes, I thought of doing a sort of music-hall song and dance. [*to Agatha*] You play that first. [*shows music*] [*to men*] Will you kindly clear the room?  
[*Agatha helps Geraldine with fancy hat, &c.*]

LORD STONEYBROKE AND CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Certainly. [*moves furniture*]

GERALDINE

[*taking off cap and apron*] I generally put on an accordion-pleated skirt, but it isn't unpacked. Hope you won't mind.

LADY FADDINGTON

Oh, not in the least. I always think skirt-dancing is such a very charming accomplishment.



NINA

[*aside*] And you would never let *me* learn !

LADY FADDINGTON

[*aside*] My dear, *she* can afford to do it ;  
her father's a lord.

NINA

I suppose one must have connections  
either at the Gaiety or in the peerage to  
skirt-dance with impunity.

GERALDINE

Now I'm ready. Will you play this first,  
and then that ?

[*Geraldine, song, with chorus, "The People  
all come to see us," or any popular serio-comic  
song. Dance. Lady Faddington becomes weary  
but tries to conceal it.*]

ALL

Thank you so much.

LADY FADDINGTON

What a charming dance ! How very  
clever !

[*Geraldine sits down. Sir Joseph fans her.*]

SIR JOSEPH

I must thank you, Miss Fitz-Maurice, for  
the deep gratification you have afforded me.

GERALDINE

So glad.

SIR JOSEPH

[*aside*] Nice girl, too, very. [*repeats  
words of chorus*]

LADY FADDINGTON

Joseph! Won't *you* sing something, Lord Stoneybroke?

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*with alacrity*] Certainly, Lady Faddington.

LADY FADDINGTON

I am so fond of Tosti, but perhaps you prefer Laurence Kellie or Maude Valérie White.

LORD STONEYBROKE

I'm afraid I don't soar quite so high. Perhaps Miss Faddington will try a duet? [*aside to Nina*] Let's give them the duet we used to sing at Pontresina, if you still have it.

NINA

[*aside*] The thing out of "The Runaway Girl?" Yes, it's here. [*goes to piano and arranges music*] [*aloud*] Perhaps Lord Stoneybroke may know this?

LORD STONEYBROKE

Oh, yes, I think I know that.

[*Stoneybroke and Nina, "There's no one in the world like you." Any serio-comic duet popular at the time may be sung here. Geraldine resumes cap and apron during duet.*]  
[*Applause.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

Very pretty indeed. Thanks so much,

Lord Stoneybroke. Nina, come and hold my wool for me.

[*Nina goes reluctantly.*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*following her*] Pray allow me, Lady Faddington. I'm awfully good at winding wool.

LADY FADDINGTON

Oh, I couldn't think of troubling you.

LORD STONEYBROKE

It's a pleasure, I assure you. [*takes knitting from her and winds ; Nina holds wool*]

NINA

Perhaps some one else will sing ? [*looks round*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

Won't you oblige us, Sir Joseph ?

SIR JOSEPH

Oh, my singing days are over, long ago.

ALL

Oh, do Sir Joseph.

LADY FADDINGTON

[*stiffly*] Sir Joseph has not sung for years.

AGATHA

Oh, what a pity ! I should have been charmed to accompany you.

SIR JOSEPH

If you will accompany me I will endeavour

to oblige, though my voice isn't what it was,  
if I can find something.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Here you are, sir. [*finds song*]

[*Song, Sir Joseph. Any song with a good chorus.*]

[*Chorus. Applause.*]

ALL

Encore ! encore !

LORD STONEYBROKE

First rate, sir.

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Couldn't have been better.

[*Double knock heard.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

A telegram ! Captain Park, will you kindly  
answer the door ?

CAPTAIN KEMPTON-PARK

Awfully sorry, I'm sure, but I can't  
possibly go to the door in this kit.

LADY FADDINGTON

No, no, I suppose not. Miss Fitz-Maurice,  
—Sarah—will you ?

GERALDINE

It's not my place to answer the door. I  
thought a footman was generally supposed to.

LADY FADDINGTON

Certainly, as a rule ; still, under the cir-

cumstances, Captain Kem—— *William* being unavoidably prevented for the moment, I must ask you to do so.

GERALDINE

Oh, all right. [*goes towards R. exit*]  
Please understand, Captain Park, that this isn't a precedent. [*Exit Geraldine.*]

LADY FADDINGTON

I wonder what it is ! It's very foolish, but a telegram always makes me nervous.

*Enter Geraldine R. with telegram on tray.*

GERALDINE

It's for Lord Stoneybroke. [*gives telegram to Lord Stoneybroke, who opens it*]

LORD STONEYBROKE

Great Scott ! [*hands it to Nina, who reads out*]

NINA

Brocklebank, 6.30. Your uncle died this afternoon. Shall expect you this afternoon. [*to Lord Stoneybroke*] So you're the Duke !

LORD STONEYBROKE

And you'll be the Duchess ! [*to Sir Joseph*]  
Sir Joseph, I am now in a position to ask for your daughter, though I had intended to do so in any case. Now, however, a long engagement will not be necessary.

[*Nina hands telegram to Sir Joseph.*]

SIR JOSEPH

[*looking at telegram through glass*] What's all this? What's all this? Want to marry Nina, do you? Very sudden!

LORD STONEYBROKE

Sudden, sir, not a bit! We've known each other nearly two years.

LADY FADDINGTON

Nearly two years?

LORD STONEYBROKE

Yes, we met at Pontresina.

LADY FADDINGTON

I thought you said, Nina, that you had never met Lord Stoneybroke—the Duke—before to-day.

NINA

I knew him under another name; but what does it matter now?

LADY FADDINGTON

It matters a great deal. [*to Lord Stoneybroke*] I should never have dreamt under ordinary circumstances of consenting to an engagement on so short an acquaintance.

LORD STONEYBROKE

[*aside*] I'm quite sure of that.

LADY FADDINGTON

But of course a previous attachment alters the case.

NINA

Yes, of course, mamma.

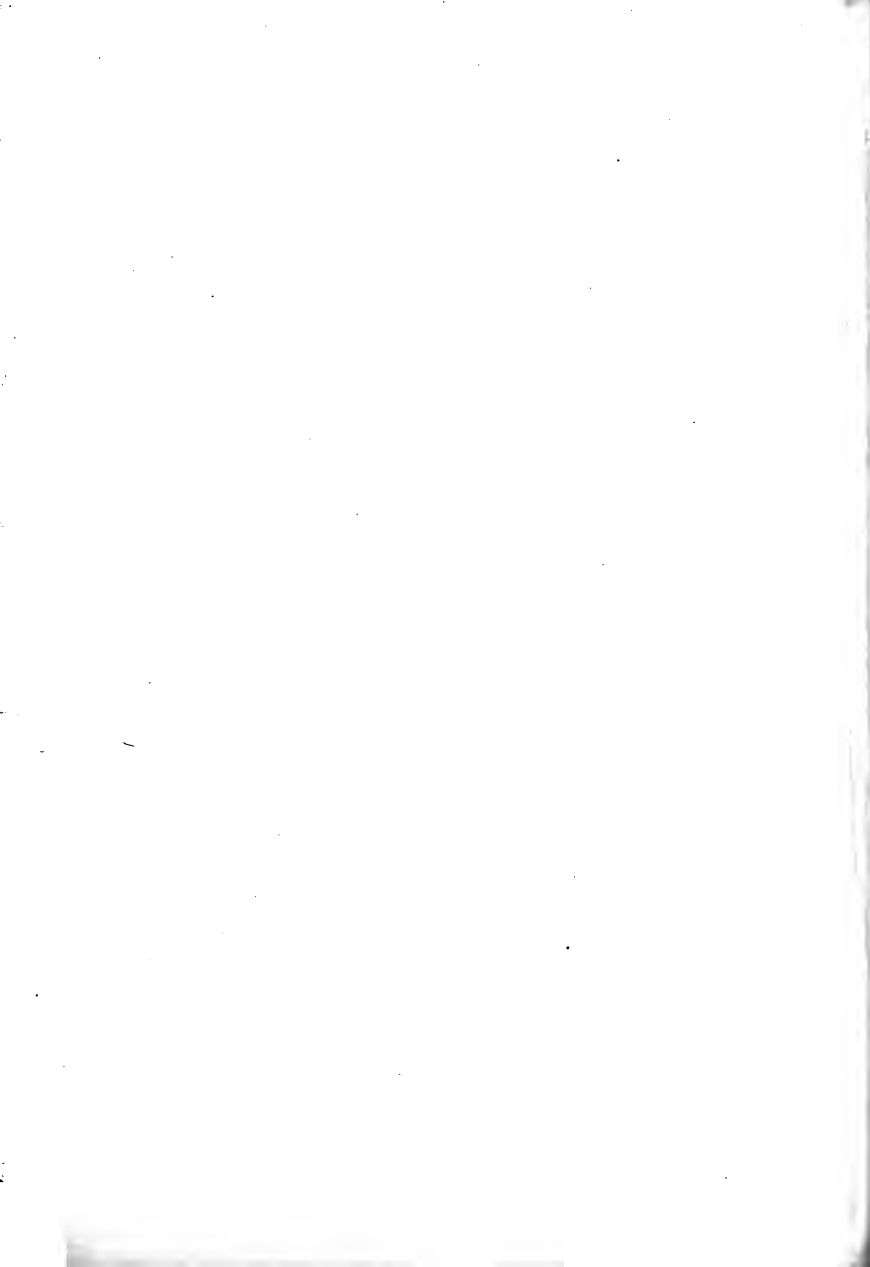
LORD STONEYBROKE

I say, I'd better go and see after some supper, hadn't I? You didn't have much dinner, did you?

NINA

And I'll come and help you.

CURTAIN.





# A Desperate Remedy

### CHARACTERS

MISS MABEL BERTRAM (*tailor-made dress, pince-nez, and business-like appearance*).

MISS ETHEL AINSLIE (*large hat, boa, and fashionable morning-dress*).

SCENE.—*A boudoir. Mabel busy at table R.C. writing; books, papers, &c. Ring heard.*

MABEL

Now who *can* that be at this time ? It isn't eleven yet.

[*voice heard*] "Is Miss Bertram in ?" "Yes, miss." [*voice announces*] "Miss Ainslie."

*Enter Ethel L.*

MABEL

Good morning, Ethel, you *are* up early, after last night.

ETHEL

[*sits by table L.*] Oh ! Mabel, I *am* so glad you're alone ; I was afraid I should find you surrounded as usual by Bazaars and Mothers' Meetings and Friendly Girls and all sorts of philanthropic horrors—you're such a dreadfully busy person.

MABEL

I hope I am always able to employ my time profitably. *Some* people, of course——

ETHEL

Now don't be pokey and tiresome ; I haven't come to be preached at. I want you to help me—you're always so sensible.

MABEL

To help you ?

ETHEL

Yes, I'm in a terrible fix.

MABEL

Certainly ; but you must be quick, I have a committee meeting here at twelve.

ETHEL

Oh, my dear, that must wait—that must wait.

MABEL

Yes ? [*encouragingly*]

ETHEL

I—I—the fact is—oh ! I can't.

MABEL

Come, Ethel, out with—it can't be anything so very dreadful.

ETHEL

Charlie—Captain D'Arcy——

MABEL

Proposed to you last night.

ETHEL

How *did* you guess ?

MABEL

I saw him.

ETHEL

Oh ! how could you ! how dreadful of you !  
[*pause*] What was he doing when you saw him ?

MABEL

Marching towards the conservatory with a  
"Death-or-Glory" look on his face.

ETHEL

Oh ! was *that* all ?

MABEL

I don't know ; was it ?

ETHEL

Well—he—he—*did* propose.

MABEL

That was only civil of him considering his  
conduct during the last six months.

ETHEL

I think your remarks are extremely uncalled  
for, Mabel, and most irr—irr—(what *is* the  
word ?) irrelevant—*most* irrelevant.

MABEL

On the contrary, they seem to *me* very  
much to the point indeed.

ETHEL

You certainly do come to the point, very  
quickly.

MABEL

Oh ! there I have the advantage of your  
friend, Captain D'Arcy, who seems rather  
inclined to—*procrastinate*, shall we say ?

ETHEL

[*getting up*] Mabel Bertram, if I hadn't known you from your earliest childhood (when you invariably bullied me and took away all my toys), I shouldn't stay here another minute.

MABEL

Oh ! yes, my dear Ethel, you would, or else you wouldn't be able to go on talking about the untold depths of Captain D'Arcy's devotion for the next hour, as I feel sure from experience you intend to.

ETHEL

It's very unkind of you, Mabel, just when I want your advice. You seem to have taken some unfortunate prejudice against Char—Captain D'Arcy—I'm sure I can't think why; he admires *you* so much.

MABEL

Really ? That's very kind of him.

ETHEL

Yes ; he says you grow upon one.

MABEL

Indeed ; what a subtle remark !

[*Mabel continues to write while talking, addresses envelopes, &c.*]

ETHEL

Yes, isn't it ? And he says, the more one sees of you the more one appreciates you.

MABEL

That, dear Ethel, is indeed a tribute to my charms, considering how very *short-sighted* he is.

ETHEL

It always strikes me as rather vulgar to comment upon the physical defects of others, and he isn't nearly as short-sighted as *you* are!

MABEL

I hope not, for his own sake.

ETHEL

He mayn't be very clever, of course, but handsome is as—I don't mean that, I mean *he* doesn't try to be sarcastic.

MABEL

Very sensible of him, he probably wouldn't succeed if he did.

ETHEL

[*gets up*] Well, he doesn't want to any way, and brains aren't everything. You think, because I haven't been at Girton and can't talk Greek, and do logarithms, or whatever they're called, I am a perfect fool and all my friends must be utterly idiotic, but let me tell you, Mabel, *some* people consider me fairly intelligent.

MABEL

Captain D'Arcy, for instance?

ETHEL

[*sits*] I do not allude to Captain D'Arcy. [*Mabel looks surprised*] Mr. Monteagle, whom even *you* ought to like, as he writes for the *Fortnightly*, and goes in for Socialism [*with dignity*]*—*Mr. Monteagle says I have extraordinary insight.

MABEL

How *very* gratifying ! Insight into what ?

ETHEL

Oh ! *I* don't know, that's what he said last night.

MABEL

Was Mr. Monteagle by any chance the gentleman with the large, earnest nose who sat next you at supper last night ?

ETHEL

You may laugh at his nose if you like, but every one says he's a very rising man, and he takes a great interest in the questions of the day.

MABEL

So I gathered from his collar.

ETHEL

Personality is *not* wit, and you know, Mabel, you are quite the most personal person I ever met.

MABEL

Except Mr. Monteagle, who seems to have been rather personal at supper.



ETHEL

Yes, he was rather—in fact *very*; and that's what I came about. You see *he*—proposed too !

MABEL

Oh, *he* proposed too ; poor Captain D'Arcy !  
How did he take his *congé* ?

ETHEL

He didn't take it at all.

MABEL

I suppose *that* means that you accepted *him* ?

ETHEL

Well, yes—in a way.

MABEL

And refused Mr. Monteagle ?

ETHEL

Well, no—not exactly.

MABEL

Then, what in Heaven's name, Ethel, *did* you do ? [*getting up*]

ETHEL

I accepted them both—at least I didn't say no to either of them, and they're both coming to-day.

MABEL

At the same time ? [*Mabel crosses L. and sits*]

ETHEL

Good gracious, no, how tactless you are,

Mabel ! Arthur—Mr. Monteagle is coming at four, he has an engagement at Toynbee Hall at 5.30, and Charlie—Captain D'Arcy can't come till five because he has to go to the War Office. Now what *am* I to do ? [*gets up and walks about*] I can't think, what *shall* I say ? [*walks about*]

MABEL

Well, you've got to say No distinctly to one or other or both of them, it's very simple.

ETHEL

It isn't at all simple, it's very, very difficult.

MABEL

Very difficult ? What is the difficulty, I should like to know ?

ETHEL

To refuse one of them.

MABEL

Good gracious, you can't marry them both.

ETHEL

Of course not, I don't want to.

MABEL

Then the question is merely which ?

ETHEL

Yes—*which* ? Do help me. [*sits down*]

MABEL

[*after slight pause*] You are quite sure you don't like one of them better than the other ?

ETHEL

Absolutely certain, that's what the trouble is.

MABEL

In *that* case I'm afraid I can't help you much ; to me they seem so very much alike.

ETHEL

Oh ! how can you say so ! they are quite different.

MABEL

Oh ! yes, I forgot, one parts his hair in the middle and the other doesn't.

ETHEL

I do wish you wouldn't go on like that, it is so horridly unkind of you, when I want your advice. If you knew them as well as I do, you would see at once that no two men ever were more unlike. They are of quite distinct types.

MABEL

Well, that ought to simplify matters considerably. Surely you know which type you prefer ?

ETHEL

Yes, yes, I do, in the abstract of course. [*pauses*] But somehow in a husband there are so many other things to consider. I want to take a practical view of the matter.

MABEL

Certainly, by all means. Let us be

practical. Let me see, Mr. Monteagle, if he is the man who works, must have quite £1,000 a year and expectations, while Captain D'Arcy can only have four or five hundred besides his pay till his——

ETHEL

Oh ! I don't care a bit about that. What I want to know is which of their temperaments is best suited to mine ? Now Charlie is very devoted to me and all that, and I rather like him, but I am not sure that he is quite serious enough about things in general. He strikes me as being a little too easy-going, he never seems in earnest about anything.

MABEL

Yet he looked very much in earnest last night.

ETHEL

Now Arthur has more depth of character, I think, and he has such high ideals about women and life, and—ah !—things. [*vaguely*]

MABEL

[*impatiently.*] Yes ! then by all means marry *Arthur*.

ETHEL

Oh ! but I'm not sure that he isn't too serious ; besides, I am afraid he is rather a Radical in some ways, and you know *we* have always been Conservative.

MABEL

If you are going to take politics into consideration, I should advise you to marry Captain D'Arcy. I should think he would adopt your views whatever they happened to be at the moment.

ETHEL

[*rises*] Oh ! But I like a man to have some opinions of his own.

MABEL

[*yawning*] Then *as* I said before, marry Mr. Monteagle.

ETHEL

[*after a pause*] I really can't make up my mind—I wish you would advise me.

MABEL

But, Ethel, if you don't like my suggestions, what am I to do ?

ETHEL

I don't know, but you *must* help me. I insist upon it.

MABEL

If you are really as absolutely indifferent as you say, I think you had better toss up. *Heads*—Mr. Monteagle, as he's so intellectual ; *tails*—Captain D'Arcy.

ETHEL

Oh no, that would be gambling. I consider it very wrong !

MABEL

Wrong? Not a bit! Desperate difficulties require desperate remedies, but as you object to tossing up, let's raffle them.

ETHEL

[*after a pause*] Very well, dear, let's raffle them. I'll write the names, and you shall draw. That'll make it quite fair. Now don't look. I feel so excited—No, I'm not *nearly* ready.

[*Business. Mabel takes up a book and looks impatiently at clock while Ethel writes names. After two false alarms, seeing that Mabel is looking, she folds up papers.*]

ETHEL

Now—you may draw.

MABEL

[*reads*] Captain D'Arcy. I congratulate you, I have no doubt you'll get on very well.

ETHEL

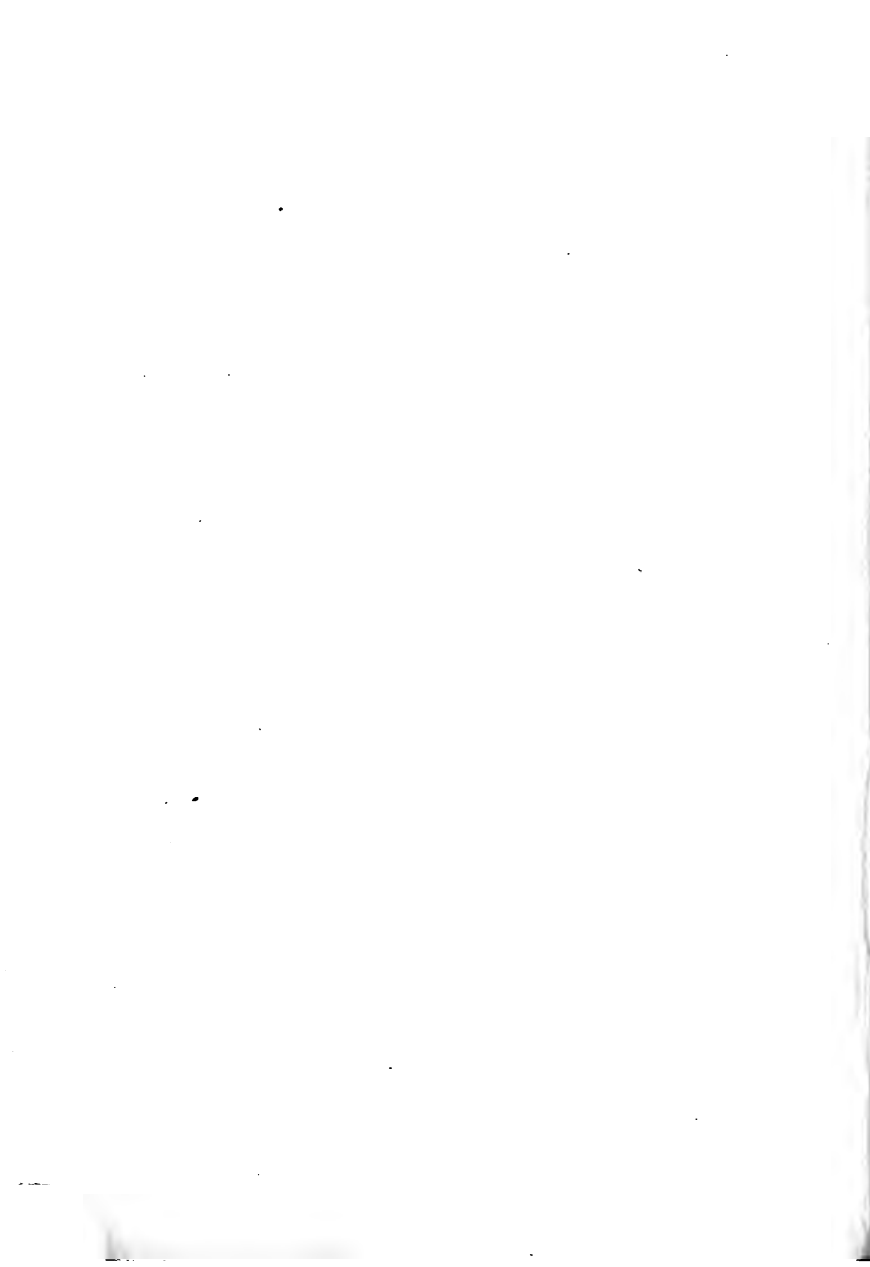
Captain D'Arcy! How funny! It's no use struggling against fate, is it? Thank you so much. [*goes to door*] I don't know what I should have done without you. I must rush out and send a wire to Arthur to tell him not to come—poor fellow! How upset he'll be! [*turns back*] Do you know, it just struck me, Mabel, how nice it would be if you married Arthur. Not quite yet, of course,

but later on when he's getting over it. You'd just suit each other, he's *so* cultured. You could work out problems together. *Do* think it over. [goes]

MABEL

[*following her to door*] Thank you—thank you very much, but somehow, I don't think *he's* the sort of man I care about. [*comes back to table*] I hope it'll be all right, I'm sure ; it seems rather a risk, but what *could* I do? I wonder if she really didn't care which—perhaps the other would have been better. [*putting room tidy, arranging books, &c., reflectively picks up the other paper out of wastepaper basket and reads it*] Captain D'Arcy—both Captain D'Arcy ! Minx !

CURTAIN.





# Red Carnations

### CHARACTERS

MISS PHYLLIS YORKE (*white summer dress*).

MRS. GEORGE BEAUMONT (*fashionable walking-dress,  
parasol, &c.*).

MR. AUSTIN FFOLLIOTT.

MR. ALGERNON FANSHAW.

SERVANT.

SCENE.—*A boudoir, tea on table. Usual furniture. Phyllis alone.*

PHYLLIS

[*looks at clock*] Ten minutes past four, and the others will be home by six, and then !—oh ! what *ages* it seems since they started, and yet it's hardly more than half an hour. Oh dear ! why doesn't he come ? I thought men in love were proverbially punctual, in fact before their time, but one never knows ; something must have delayed him ; perhaps he's ill, oh ! . . . no, no, then he'd have telegraphed ; perhaps some tiresome man has come to see him at the Club, and they're smoking contentedly at this very moment—contentedly ?—no. [*shakes her head*] I'll just read his note again while I'm waiting. [*takes out note from pocket*] That's to-day. "Dear Miss Yorke"—how badly he's written it ! in pencil too—I suppose that's agitation—"I will call this afternoon in hopes of finding you at home, as there is something I want

very much to say to you. Of course you can guess what it is, as you must know how I felt towards you ever since I have known you."—I'm sure I didn't, I used to think he didn't care a bit.—"Please wear these flowers to show me if I have a chance."—How absurd of him!—"I shall call about four to learn my fate.

"Yours ever,  
"A. F."

Austin Ffolliott—I always liked the name of Austin. I wish he'd come. I suppose "about" four means nearly five.

[*Ring heard.*]

[*gets up*] There he is. [*Goes towards window at back of stage*] Oh! I can't see him, I can't possibly, I'll say "not at home." Too late, he's coming upstairs, he'll be here in a moment. [*Looks in glass*] I don't care, I'm perfectly calm, perfectly calm. I shall simply—— [*sits on sofa and takes up book*]

*Enter Mrs. George Beaumont R.*

PHYLLIS

Molly! [*disappointed*]

MRS. G. B.

I'm very sorry, but I can't possibly help it. Accept my abject apologies.

[*Comes down centre to Phyllis.*]

PHYLLIS

What for ?

MRS. G. B.

For being myself ; it's quite unavoidable, I assure you.

PHYLLIS

What nonsense ! Have some tea, I expected you ages ago.

[*Phyllis goes to table and pours out tea.*]

MRS. G. B.

Oh !

PHYLLIS

I mean I thought you'd look in.

MRS. G. B.

How very odd ! you must have second sight.

PHYLLIS

Why ? [*Mrs. G. B. sits down near tea-table*]

MRS. G. B.

Because I didn't expect to be in town to-day. We were going on the river with the Carews, but the party fell through. What lovely carnations ! They mean "vanished hopes," don't they ?

PHYLLIS

Do they ? how silly ! They *are* nice, aren't they ?

MRS. G. B.

Almost a pity to waste them on the desert

air, isn't it? But perhaps they won't be wasted after all. Where are the others?

PHYLLIS

Oh! they've all gone to Hurlingham and I'm left lamenting at home.

MRS. G. B.

Like the latest edition of "Cinderella."

PHYLLIS

Exactly, only without the Fairy Godmother—up till now.

MRS. G. B.

Judging from your elated manner, I should say she had been here before.

PHYLLIS

[*Laughing nervously*] Oh! no such luck, I assure you. I only wish she had. [*rises up to fetch cake*]

MRS. G. B.

Well, let's hope the rest of the story will work out all right; after all the sequel was the only part that really mattered, wasn't it? The pumpkin was merely a detail.

PHYLLIS

How painfully prosaic you are! you've no imagination.

MRS. G. B.

No, my strong point is practical observation. By the way, I see you've got on your best dress. [*looking through lorgnette*]

PHYLLIS

[*confused*] Well—yes, it was such a lovely day, the crêpon isn't ready, and my others are all as old as the hills, so—that I—you see——

MRS. G. B.

Exactly. When do you expect him?

PHYLLIS

Him? Who? How mysterious you are! but you never do say what you mean.

MRS. G. B.

[*Phyllis pours tea for herself and sits*] And you don't always mean what you say.

PHYLLIS

Really! I—I——

MRS. G. B.

Oh! don't apologise. I don't mind a bit. After all why should you? Only your methods are so ingenuous.

PHYLLIS

So glad you think so. [*with spirit*]

MRS. G. B.

And talking of being ingenuous, how fares the Knight of the Blameless Button-hole?

PHYLLIS

Who in the world do you mean?

MRS. G. B.

The Chevalier of the Courtly Collars. The alluring Algernon, of course.

PHYLLIS

Oh! Mr. Fanshaw. [*laughs*] I saw him the day before yesterday at a dance, "going strong," as he would say.

MRS. G. B.

Constant as ever, I suppose. [*puts down cup*]

PHYLLIS

[*Constant*] To whom?

MRS. G. B.

Why, to you.

PHYLLIS

What nonsense! Why, I've known Algy Fanshaw ever since I came out. We all have, he's just like a second cousin once removed to the whole family. Why, he always sees us home from theatres.

MRS. G. B.

How convincingly platonic! [*leans back*]

PHYLLIS

[*laughs*] You are funny, Molly! Fancy *your* taking up that conventional line. I can't see why a man shouldn't see one constantly and like one's society and even—yes, even admire one without any sentiment coming in.

MRS. G. B.

[*leans forward and speaks very clearly, and with emphasis*] Then, my dear Phyllis, you're like the



“ Old man who supposed  
That the street door was partially closed,  
Till some very large rats  
Ate his coat and his hats,  
While this peaceful old gentleman dozed.”

PHYLLIS

Don't be absurd !

MRS. G. B.

Only in this case the conclusion will be  
“ till this diffident suitor proposed.”

PHYLLIS

[*gets up*] Molly ! [*reprovingly*]

MRS. G. B.

Though personally I shouldn't call Mr.  
Fanshaw diffident, should you ? [*uses lorg-  
nette*]

PHYLLIS

I shouldn't call him anything. He doesn't  
[*indifferently*] interest me at all.

MRS. G. B.

Oh ! doesn't he ? Well, he will very soon.

PHYLLIS

I'm quite sure he won't.

MRS. G. B.

Well, we shall see. [*gets up, and puts on  
gloves, &c.*]

PHYLLIS

Oh ! are you going ? [*obviously relieved*]

MRS. G. B.

Yes, the brougham's waiting, and I have

some shopping to do, I'll look in later, perhaps. [*puts on boa and takes parasol*]

PHYLLIS

Yes, do. [*following her to door*]

MRS. G. B.

Goodbye for the present, I don't suppose he'll be long now.

PHYLLIS

I don't know what you mean. So sorry you can't stay.

MRS. G. B.

[*coming back*] Oh ! by the way, Phyllis, your fringe is rapidly coming out of curl with suppressed excitement. Of course it doesn't matter, but I thought I'd just mention it. Goodbye.

[*Exit.*]

PHYLLIS

Thank goodness ! [*going to glass*] Oh ! what a fright I look ! How unfortunate Molly's coming in just then ! I do hope her shopping will take ages, but I'm afraid it won't. However, it will be all right by then. [*ring heard*] At last ! Now my manner must be quite natural, quite—just as if I—— [*throws herself on sofa, reads*]

*Enter Algernon, very correctly dressed, with hat and stick.*

PHYLLIS

How d'you do, Mr. Fanshaw. [*aside*] How

tiresome, he'll stay for hours ! [*aloud*] May I give you some very cold tea ?

ALGERNON

No, thanks—I mean, yes, please.

[*Phyllis goes to tea-table and pours tea out.*]

[*Algernon aside, looking at the flowers, sits down after depositing stick and hat*] Got them on, I see.

PHYLLIS

Sugar ?

ALGERNON

Please. Awful luck finding you alone, Miss Yorke.

PHYLLIS

Oh ! all the others have gone to Hurlingham.

ALGERNON

I suppose they won't be back for some time. [*anxiously*]

PHYLLIS

I'm afraid not, I'm so sorry.

ALGERNON

I'm not. [*brings chair closer*]

[*Phyllis plays nervously with flowers.*]

ALGERNON

Awfully good of you to stay at home to-day.

PHYLLIS

Oh ! I don't care for Hurlingham, it gets duller each year. Every one seems to go to Ranelagh.

ALGERNON

[*confidentially*] That sort of thing doesn't amuse you?

PHYLLIS

No, I can't say it does.

ALGERNON

You don't care for society. I can quite understand.

PHYLLIS

Oh! yes I do. *Some* kinds of society. I like balls and theatres and [*retrospectively*] dinners sometimes; but I certainly don't experience any delirious joy at looking at eight men galloping after a ball.

ALGERNON

I say—you're awfully down on polo.

PHYLLIS

I always think these *al-fresco* entertainments are such a mistake in our climate, one never knows how to dress for them.

ALGERNON

Then you wouldn't like to live in the country. [*disappointedly*]

PHYLLIS

No, I hate it. [*looks at clock*]

ALGERNON

Oh! by Jove, even with some one you cared for a good deal?

PHYLLIS

Oh! circumstances alter cases, of course. I mean I prefer London as a rule.

[*Phyllis goes to window on pretext of pulling up blind.*]

ALGERNON

[*aside*] She does look ripping in white—don't quite like the way her hair's done, though. I must tell her about it afterwards. I'm not getting on very fast somehow, I must buck up a bit. [*Phyllis comes back*] [*aloud*] Are you fond of yachting, Miss Yorke? [*puts down tea*]

PHYLLIS

I don't know, I've never done any; is it nice? [*comes back and sits on sofa*]

ALGERNON

Nothing like it, if you happen to be a good sailor. I've just bought rather a nice little yacht. I mean to take her down to Cowes in August. I thought of calling her the *Phyllis*.

PHYLLIS

Oh! really, how very nice of you! but—

ALGERNON

I hope you'll like her. [*anxiously*] You'll christen her, of course.

PHYLLIS

Oh! thanks, it's must kind of you to think of it, but we never go to Cowes.

ALGERNON

[*coming nearer*] But you will with me?

PHYLLIS

[*getting up*] Mr. Fanshaw!

ALGERNON

[*following her*] Call me Algy.

PHYLLIS

Are you mad?

ALGERNON

Well, really you know, under the circumstances.

PHYLLIS

What circumstances? May I ask what you mean? [*faces him, L.C.*]

ALGERNON

Why, you're going to marry me, aren't you?

PHYLLIS

I'm afraid I don't understand you.

ALGERNON

But you've got them on all right. I was afraid at first you'd think it wasn't good enough, but directly I saw the flowers, I knew it was all right. [*puts tie straight and draws himself up*]

PHYLLIS

[*slowly*] The flowers?

ALGERNON

Yes; awfully sorry, I couldn't get anything better, but there wasn't any time, don't you know.

PHYLLIS

You sent me these flowers? [*slowly as if beginning to understand*]

ALGERNON

You—you got my note, didn't you ?

PHYLLIS

[*grasping situation*] Your note ! [*pause*]

No.

ALGERNON

Confound it, there's some mistake ! I signed my initials.

PHYLLIS

Your initials ?

ALGERNON

Yes—A. F., don't you know ; I *knew* you'd understand that all right. [*aside*] What can have become of it ?

PHYLLIS

[*aside*] Algernon Fanshaw, and I thought it—oh ! what shall I do ? [*aloud*] I—I am so very sorry, Mr. Fanshaw, but it, it is *quite* impossible.

ALGERNON

[*following her*] Oh ! don't say that. Don't say it's impossible. Take time to consider—to think it over.

PHYLLIS

I shall not change my mind. [*takes out handkerchief and note drops*]

ALGERNON

Allow me. [*sees note*] By Jove ! [*picks it up*] [*pauses*] So you did get it after all ? [*taking note*]

PHYLLIS

Oh ! forgive me, I didn't understand.

ALGERNON

But you're wearing the flowers—why, what an ass I am ! Of course you thought some other chap sent them.

PHYLLIS

It was all a mistake. I'm so sorry.

ALGERNON

[*Stiffly*] Not at all—the mistake is entirely on my side. I suppose I've no business to ask who he is ?

PHYLLIS

Oh ! no, no, there's no one—no one.

[*Turns and crosses up to back.*]

ALGERNON

[*aside*] Must be some Johnny with the same initials. Who the devil is he ?

[*Enter Servant R. with card and tray, which she gives to Phyllis and goes out.*]

PHYLLIS

Oh ! Mr. Austin Ffolliott. [*reading card*]

ALGERNON

Great Scott ! [*struck by idea*] Confound him !

PHYLLIS

[*still looking at card*] P.P.C.

ALGERNON

What ! Going away, is he ?



PHYLLIS

Yes, I suppose so. [*slowly*]

ALGERNON

[*aside*] The blackguard! [*aloud*] And you won't be seeing him again! [*hopefully*]

PHYLLIS

No, not again. [*still looking at card, slight pause*]

ALGERNON

I don't want to bother you just now, but I suppose you couldn't get to feel differently about it—that is, about me—in time?

PHYLLIS

I'm afraid not.

ALGERNON

I knew you'd say that. I knew it wouldn't really make any difference. Just like my luck. Well, I must be going. [*gets up*]

*Enter Mrs. G. B.*

MRS. G. B.

[*Coming up stage quickly.*] Oh! Phyllis, I've brought Mr. Ffolliott, he's just been leaving a P.P.C. card. I caught him in the act—that's to say, on the doorstep. He's just got an appointment somewhere in Uganda.

*Enter Austin.*

[*to Algernon*] What did you say it was?  
[*to Austin*] Something very hot and unpro-

nounceable. *No*, Mr. Fanshaw, *not* there—at least not yet, and he's starting to-morrow.

AUSTIN

How d'you do? [*to Phyllis, nods to Algernon*]  
I must apologise for calling at such an unconventional hour, I merely intended to leave a card, but Mrs. Beaumont insisted on——

PHYLLIS

Oh! every one who knows Mrs. Beaumont always expects her to——

MRS. G. B.

"To rush in where angels fear to tread."  
I hope you're flattered, Mr. Ffolliott.

AUSTIN

What at?

[*Phyllis at tea-table, B.*]

MRS. G. B.

At being called an angel. [*laugh*] You don't happen to have a spare crown about, do you?

AUSTIN

Not much—nor half a crown.

MRS. G. B.

Dear me, how heartrending! You ought to apply to the "Distressed Irish Fund." You are Irish, I suppose? [*Austin nods*]

PHYLLIS

Won't you sit down, Mr. Ffolliott? I'm

afraid the tea is quite cold. I'll ring for some more.

AUSTIN

No, thanks. The fact is I have only just time to—I start to-morrow.

*[Goes up back to tea-table.]*

MRS. G. B.

*[To Algernon, who is going]* You're not going away, Mr. Fanshaw, just as we're come. How very pointed!

ALGERNON

Not at all, I was just going. I've been here some time—I mean I merely looked in.  
*[sitting down]*

PHYLLIS

*[To Austin]* I suppose you'll be away for some time?

AUSTIN

Oh! yes; three years at any rate, perhaps longer.

*[Phyllis and Austin B., Mrs. G. B. and Algernon, F.]*

PHYLLIS

You must be looking forward to it immensely.

AUSTIN

Oh! rather. Sort of life that suits me

down to the ground, you know : no worries,  
no calls, no top-hats, nothing to think about.

MRS. G. B.

Except the *bills* you've left behind you.

AUSTIN

Bills ? Oh ! I shan't bother myself about  
*them*—at least as little as possible.

PHYLLIS

I suppose the climate is quite healthy.

AUSTIN

Well, not exactly *healthy*—in fact that's the  
only drawback ; you see, Uganda's a bit  
swampy and——

ALGERNON

Pretty poisonous, I take it. [*with satisfaction*]

AUSTIN

But of course there are compensations—  
getting away from civilisation and all that.

MRS. G. B.

I can't imagine why you want to talk like  
" Locksley Hall " up-to-date.

AUSTIN

Very sorry, I'm sure, to do anything so  
hackneyed. Still I rather agree with the  
chap in the poem wanting to go further  
afield, and that sort of thing.

MRS. G. B.

Quite so, but when you've finally burst all  
links of habit such as afternoon tea and  
Covent Garden balls, and boxes at the

Empire, don't you think you may still retain a lingering preference for half a day at Ascot to a cycle of Cathay ?

[*Austin shakes his head and turns to Phyllis.*]

ALGERNON

What's that ?

MRS. G. B.

"A Cycle of Cathay," d'you know that kind of cycle, Mr. Fanshaw ? or do you pin your faith to a Beeston Humber ?

ALGERNON

Oh ! now you're rotting me, Mrs. Beaumont. I know better than that. "*Cathay*" means Africa. [*triumphantly*]

MRS. G. B.

Or Brixton, occasionally. Good gracious, it's nearly six, and I'm dining early and going to the theatre, I *must* go. Shall I give you a lift ? [*gets up*]

ALGERNON

Thanks. Well, if it's not out of your way. Goodbye, Miss Yorke. [*stiffly*]

MRS. G. B.

Goodbye, Phyllis ; *bon voyage*, Mr. Ffolliott. I shall picture you in your tropical Arcadia alone with Nature, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

AUSTIN

Oh ! I hope not altogether, Mrs. Beaumont ; goodbye, Fanshaw.

ALGERNON

Goodbye. [*going*][*Exeunt Mrs. G. B. and Algernon.*]

AUSTIN

[*looking at watch*] I'm afraid I must be going too. I've got a good deal to do.

PHYLLIS

Of course you must be very busy.

[*Both get up and stand by table.*]

AUSTIN

[*taking up one of the flowers that had fallen down*] You've dropped one of your flowers. Awfully jolly colour, aren't they?

PHYLLIS

I don't care for—carnations.

AUSTIN

[*looks at flowers*] Oh! don't you really? They go so well with your white dress too. May I take this as a memento of—England?[*Laughs constrainedly.*]

PHYLLIS

Oh, certainly—if you like; but I thought buttonholes had quite gone out.

AUSTIN

[*taking it*] Thanks, awfully. [*puts it in coat*] Well goodbye, Miss Yorke; we've had some good times together at Princes and—

PHYLLIS

Oh yes—very. [*with constraint*]

AUSTIN

I shall often think of them and—you in my solitary life ; you won't forget me completely, I hope ? [*very cheerfully and getting louder to cover evident confusion*]

PHYLLIS

Oh, dear, no ! I shall always remember your waltzing and skating.

AUSTIN

[*laughs*] How very severe ! Please remember me to Mrs. Yorke and your sisters ; so sorry not to have seen them.

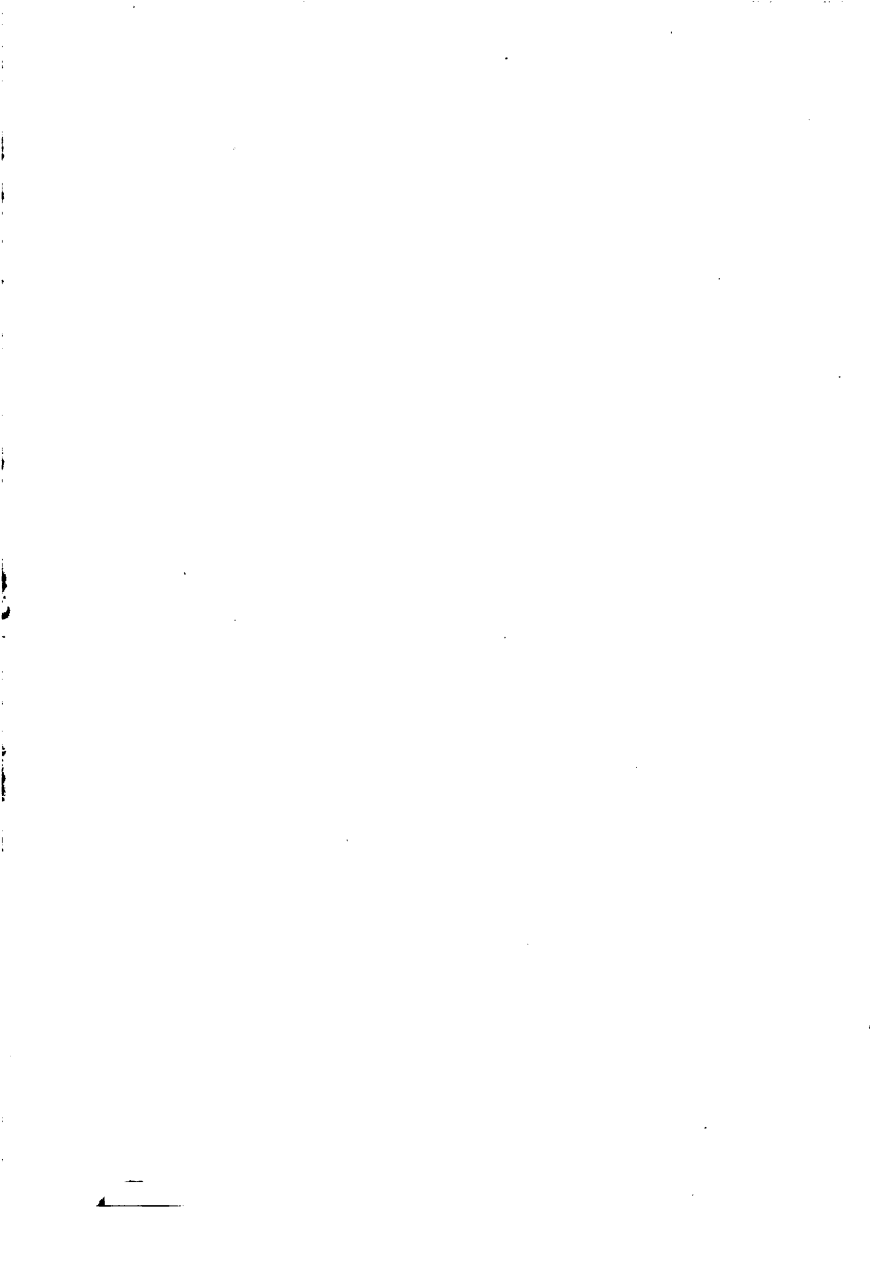
PHYLLIS

Yes, they'll be sorry to miss you. Goodbye.  
[*rings bell*] [*Exit Austin R.*]

PHYLLIS

[*drearily at table, puts flowers down*]  
"Awfully jolly colour, goes so well with white." What was it Molly called them ?  
"Vanished hopes." Was that only to-day or a hundred years ago ? Ah [*takes up flowers*]  
—I think your name does suit you after all.

CURTAIN.





# The Other Fellow

### **CHARACTERS**

**TOM DENNISON** (*a struggling journalist*).

**MAY WOODBURN** (*a young lady of literary tastes* ).

SCENE.—*A suburban drawing-room. Tables, chairs, sofa R.C. May reading L. in arm-chair.*

*Enter Tom.*

MAY

[*gets up to receive him*] How d'you do, Mr. Dennison? How nice of you to come to-day! And when did you get back from Paris?

TOM

Only yesterday. [*sits down*]

MAY

My family have deserted me as you see—they have all gone to the Academy

TOM

I'm awfully glad—I mean sorry—that is [*stammers*] the fact is, Miss Woodburn, that this may be the last opportunity I shall have of seeing you for a long time.

MAY

Really?

TOM

Yes; I've made up my mind to go out to

China. My brother writes that there is an opening in his bank.

MAY

Isn't that rather a sudden idea ? [*nervously*]

TOM

Not very ; I have been considering it as an alternative for some time.

MAY

Please explain yourself. I thought you were getting on so well in journalism.

TOM

It depends what you call well.

MAY

Why, you are on the staff of two daily papers, and occasionally get articles taken by the *Wednesday Gazette*.

TOM

Very occasionally, I fear. No I've thought it all over while I was away, and I've come to the conclusion that it isn't good enough to grind away the best years of one's life in "Grub Street" with little or no prospect of success. I haven't the pluck for it and that's a fact.

MAY

Oh, but I am sure you have. Look at your article on "Contemporary Teutonic Literature," what a lot of correspondence it called forth !

TOM

Mostly of a flatly contradictory nature.

MAY

Well, that just shows how carefully it must have been read, and then, though I totally disagree with you, as you know, about the "woman question" as you call it, still I admit that some of your arguments are almost convincing.

TOM

You are too kindly a critic, Miss Woodburn. I don't know what I should have done during the two last years, without your friendly encouragement. However, that's all over now.

MAY

Oh, but why must you go away ?

TOM

Because——

MAY

But I thought you had got something to do on a new paper that was going to pay you very well and was bound to lead to something better ; at least you said so the night before you went away—at the Bensons' dance—don't you remember ?

TOM

[*aside*] Don't I ? [*aloud*] I'm afraid I said a good many things on that occasion that I had no business to. Please forget them. [*gets up and walks about*]

MAY

Certainly, Mr. Dennison, but really there is

no occasion to excite yourself over such a trifle as the mere recollection of an ordinary ballroom conversation.

TOM

*[coming down stage towards her]* Don't, please; you must have known that it was more than an ordinary ballroom conversation to me. You realised what I meant when I asked you if you thought a man was justified in marrying on £350 a year. Didn't you?

MAY

*[nervously gets up and arranges vases on table]* Yes. No, oh, never mind that—tell me about your new paper.

TOM

Unfortunately there's nothing to tell, it appears I counted my chickens before they were hatched—I haven't got it.

MAY

Why not?

TOM

Simply because the editor has given it to some other fellow.

MAY

How horrid of him! Don't you hate the other fellow?

TOM

I'm afraid I do rather—you see, it meant so much to me.

MAY

Did it? [*softly*]

TOM

Yes, my whole future depended upon it in a way. [*pause*] Miss Woodburn—May—I've no right to ask you now—but—but if the other fellow hadn't got it, should I have had a chance?

MAY

[*blushing*] I—don't—know.

TOM

[*sighs*] Well, it's no good thinking about it now. I've got to sail on the 14th. [*goes up stage to back*]

MAY

Must you?

TOM

Yes. [*from back of stage*]

MAY

I'm so very, very sorry about your disappointment, particularly as I've got something rather nice to tell you.

TOM

Yes, what is it?

MAY

Well, you know I've always longed to have something to do—something that really mattered.

TOM

I'm sure I can't think why. [*coming down stage*]

U O F A

MAY

No man ever can, but if you were a girl, and had three sisters all out and none of you married, and if you weren't particularly musical, or artistic, or anything, you'd understand.

TOM

What nonsense ! I wouldn't take up these morbid ideas. [*sits down on a different chair*]

MAY

[*disregarding him*] And I couldn't possibly teach anything, and mother won't hear of my going into a hospital.

TOM

I should think not. [*plays with paper-cutter on table*]

MAY

So the only thing that I seem to have any turn for is literature—you know you always encouraged me to put down my thoughts on paper.

TOM

Never with a view to publication ; too many women write nowadays as it is. [*puts down paper-cutter*]

MAY

Oh, I know your views about women, you would like them all to stay at home, and darn stockings, and look nice, and have no ideas of their own.

BYRON



TOM

I don't remember insisting upon the last qualification, but I admit that I consider that a woman's proper sphere is her home—unless, of course, she *has* to earn her living.

MAY

Then I don't think I'll tell you my news.

TOM

Yes, please do.

MAY

Well, about a fortnight ago, I was introduced to the editor of *Gossip*.

TOM

By Jove !

MAY

Such a charming man ! Have you ever met him ?

TOM

I have had that honour.

MAY

Isn't he nice ?

TOM

Oh, very. Where did you meet him ?

MAY

Dining at the Steeles'. He took me in.

TOM

Ah ! he's pretty good at that.

MAY

We got on capitally. I told him I scribbled a little, and should like to take it up seriously,

and he was awfully kind, and asked me if I thought I could do book reviews.

TOM

Oh, did he ?

MAY

I said I was sure I could. You know you've always said I had the critical faculty ; and so the end of it is that I am to do a column and a-half every week for £50 a year.

TOM

[*aside*] And he promised me £200.

MAY

Isn't it liberal—a mere beginner like me, too ? Why, how unsympathetic you are ! I thought you'd be interested at all events.

TOM

So I am awfully—but I'd no idea you were so—advanced. Well, I must be off ; it is past six, and I have a lot to do before seven.  
[*gets up*]

MAY

Oh, but you will come again before you leave ?

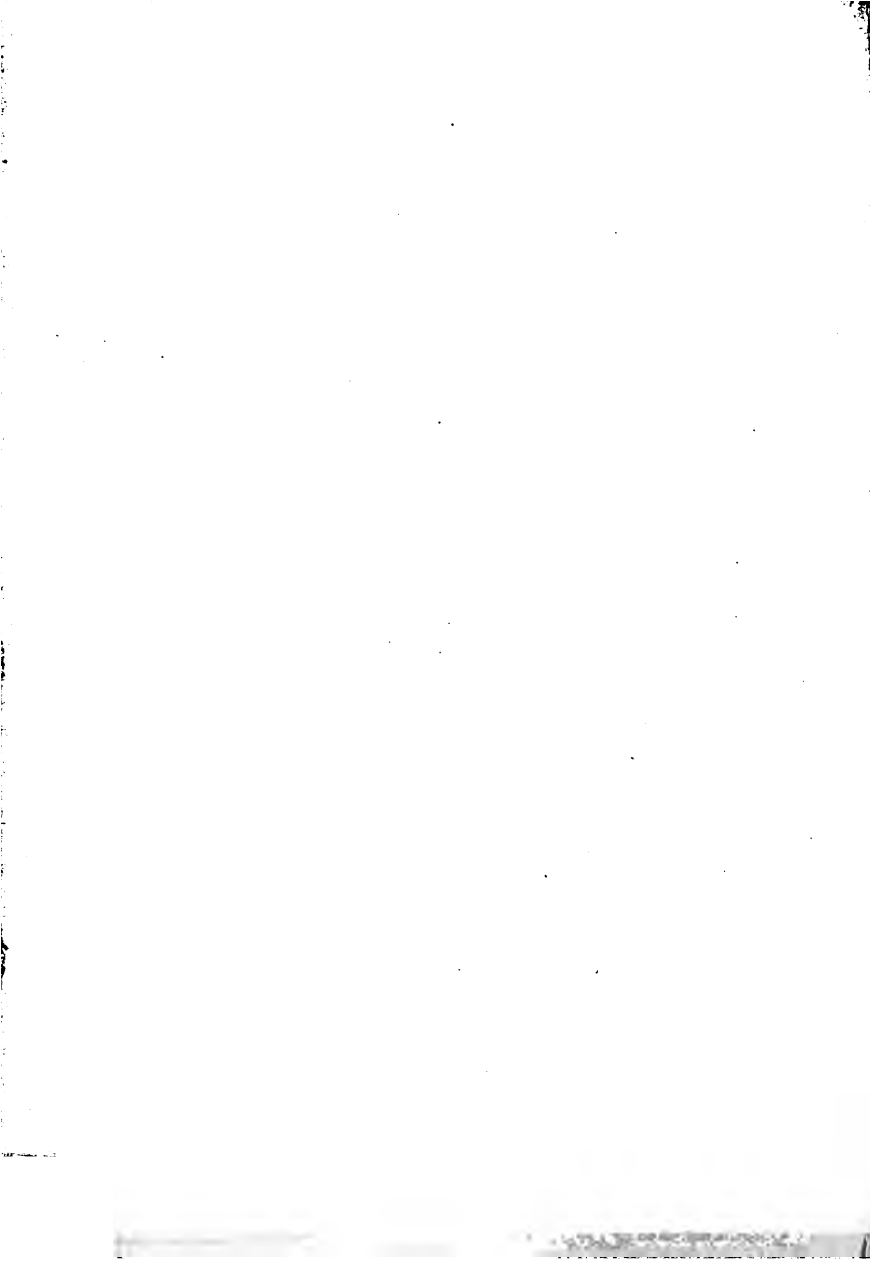
TOM

I think not—I shall be rather busy up to the 14th. Goodbye, Miss Woodburn ; I congratulate you heartily on your success, and shall expect to find you one of our leading lady journalists when I come back in ten or twelve years.

MAY

[*following him to the door*] Goodbye.  
[*he goes*] Oh, how horrid everything is! I  
wish—I wish there was no such thing as  
money in the world. [*comes back to table*]

CURTAIN.



## A Matter of Taste

## CHARACTERS

|                          |   |                 |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| SIR ARCHIBALD GORE       | } | <i>friends.</i> |
| JIM ST. AUSTIN           |   |                 |
| MISS EVELYN CHESTER      | } | <i>sisters.</i> |
| MISS AMY CHESTER         |   |                 |
| SUSAN ( <i>a maid</i> ). |   |                 |

EVELYN and AMY *light summer dresses*. SIR ARCHIBALD and ST. AUSTIN *morning dress in country—i.e., flannels or knickerbockers, as preferred*).

## NOTE.

If preferred, this piece can be arranged to be played out-of-doors in a garden, in which case a greenhouse or another part of the garden can be substituted for conservatory, and tea can be supposed to be laid indoors.

SCENE.—*A drawing-room in country villa with conservatory door leading out of it at one side, back of stage. If more convenient, garden scene may be substituted at back of stage through window. Evelyn and Amy. Evelyn working R.C. ; Amy turning over pages of magazine L.B.*

AMY

It is hot !

EVELYN

You've said that three times at least in the last ten minutes.

AMY

Papa is having a lovely day for the cattle show, isn't he ? [*gets up and looks through window*]

EVELYN

Very. [*laconically*] Particularly in the train.

AMY

Oh, I'm sure it will be delightful at Coombe.

EVELYN

I suppose that's why you wouldn't go this morning.

AMY

[*reproachfully*] No, it wasn't. [*confused*]  
It was because we have to play croquet at  
the Rectory to-day at five. We accepted  
weeks ago.

EVELYN

So we did. Well, [*looking up*] I suppose  
it's nearly time to get ready, isn't it? [*puts  
down work*]

AMY

Oh no, [*comes down c.*] not yet. Dear  
me, how close it is! Fancy croquet in this  
weather! Don't you think it's too warm to  
play? [*anxiously*]

EVELYN

[*relieved*] Well, perhaps it is, rather. At  
all events, we could go later.

AMY

Oh, yes. Let's go later. [*slight pause.*  
*Amy sits down*]

EVELYN

It seems a pity to stay in the house all day  
though, doesn't it?

AMY

[*with alacrity*] Yes, indeed.

EVELYN

We *must* go to the village some time to  
order the cream.

AMY

Yes.



EVELYN

Suppose we go now ; it's quite cool by the lane. [*both get up as if going to door L.*]

AMY

I don't suppose any one will call to-day.

EVELYN

[*decidedly*] Oh, no, every one's away.

AMY

Yes, of course. [*goes to door and stops suddenly as if struck by an idea*] Evelyn ! I've just remembered. I believe Sir Archibald Gore said something about coming over this afternoon.

EVELYN

Did he ? What a bore ! But I don't suppose he really will.

AMY

Oh, no, I'm sure he won't ; still, in case he [*stops*] should, it might look rather rude if we were *both* out.

EVELYN

Nonsense. We can't stay in all day. Besides, he only said he *might* come.

AMY

[*firmly, at L. exit*] I think it would be more polite if *one* of us stayed in. [*comes down c.*]

EVELYN

I never heard anything so ridiculous ; however [*comes down c. also*], I don't mind staying in. [*with resigned air*]

AMY

No. I'm sure you'll get one of your headaches if you don't have some fresh air. It's so bad for you to be in the house.

EVELYN

Really, Amy, I am the best judge of that ; besides [*looking at corner where music rack is*]—oh, I see Mr. St. Austin has forgotten his music ; how very tiresome ! I daresay he will come to fetch it before he leaves [*moves towards chair R.C.*]

AMY

Well, I can give it to Sir Archibald for him. I don't suppose they'll *both* come. [*Evelyn sits down*] I wonder how long he—they—are going to stay ?

EVELYN

Till they're tired of fishing, I suppose.

AMY

Should you think to-day was good for fishing ?

EVELYN

Not at all, and therefore they will probably be leaving soon. The accommodation at the inn can't be very comfortable, and except for the river the neighbourhood isn't particularly attractive.

AMY

No. I'm afraid—I mean I suppose not. Sir Archibald and Mr. St. Austin seem great

friends, don't they? I can't think why. They're so *very* different.

EVELYN

Absolutely. [*goes on working*]

AMY

Mr. St. Austin's so difficult to talk to : he never says anything. *I* can't get on with him a bit.

EVELYN

I don't think *you've* had much opportunity of judging.

AMY

Sir Archibald's much more amusing.

EVELYN

It depends upon what you consider amusing, personally *I* find him rather tiring.

AMY

That's because you don't really know him.

EVELYN

Possibly. You see, I haven't had your advantages.

AMY

[*getting up and going to window*] I don't know what you mean, Evelyn, but as you seem annoyed about something—I can't think what—and as Mr. St. Austin doesn't seem likely to call to-day——

EVELYN

[*sarcastically*] Nor Sir Archibald.

AMY

Perhaps we had better go out. [*with dignity*]  
[*at window*] Good gracious, here he is!

EVELYN

[*jumps up*] Which?

AMY

Both. They're coming in at the gate. My  
hair——

EVELYN

And my blouse.

[*Both exeunt L., quickly, Amy first.*

[*Pause of a minute.*]

[*voice heard outside*] No, sir. Colonel Chester  
is out, but the young ladies are at home.  
This way sir.

*Enter Sir Archibald Gore and Mr. St.  
Austin, preceded by Susan.*

SUSAN

I'll tell Miss Chester, sir, if you will take a  
seat. [*Exit Susan R.*

*Sir Archibald and St. Austin sit down R.C.  
and L.C., opposite each other. St. Austin takes  
up paper. Sir Archibald gets up and walks  
about; takes photograph off table and  
examines it.]*

SIR ARCHIBALD

Rather a good photograph.

ST. AUSTIN

[*without looking up at it*] Not bad.  
[*absently*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

Doesn't half do her justice though. Ought to be taken full face. Don't see her eyes like this. [*replaces it on table*]

ST. AUSTIN

[*rousing himself*] I don't agree with you, her profile's one of her best points. [*puts down paper*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*thoughtfully*] Yes, yes, perhaps so. [*looks impatiently at watch*] What a time she—they are! [*takes up the paper which St. Austin has put down and glances at it*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

I see Firefly's second favourite now.

ST. AUSTIN

Yes.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Got anything on him?

ST. AUSTIN

No. [*shortly*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

Rather fancy Red Cent myself. Good for a place, I think?

ST. AUSTIN

Pretty safe. [*slight pause*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*getting up and pulling up collar*] I say, St. Austin, it——

ST. AUSTIN

Yes?

SIR ARCHIBALD

It's no good beating about the bush. Fact is I want you to do me a favour. [*St. Austin looks up*] No, it isn't money, it's the other thing. [*begins to talk faster.*] We've seen a good deal of the Chesters since you came down here and I daresay you've noticed that I was rather struck in a certain quarter. [*walks about*]

ST. AUSTIN

Well, go ahead.

SIR ARCHIBALD

I never seem to get a chance of speaking to her alone. Somehow we're always all together in a bally crowd, don't you know.

ST. AUSTIN

[*emphatically*] Yes, by Jove! we always are.

SIR ARCHIBALD

So I thought as it is a good opportunity—the Colonel being away and all that—it would be awfully decent of you if you would tackle the other one.

ST. AUSTIN

[*mechanically*] Tackle the other one?

SIR ARCHIBALD

Yes, talk to her, my boy, talk to her—nice girl too, one of the best.

ST. AUSTIN

Oh, quite.

SIR ARCHIBALD

You see, it can't make much difference to *you*, but it does a lot to me, and I mayn't have another chance, as I'm leaving the day after to-morrow.

ST. AUSTIN

[*aside*] Neither shall I.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*cheerfully*] You don't mind? You see, you only met her abroad a fortnight ago, and I've known her over a month. It makes a difference, doesn't it?

ST. AUSTIN

[*drily*] Oh, yes—a lot.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*coming down c. to St. Austin*] I'll be awfully obliged if you'll do it. I'm—rather hard hit—first time, you know.

ST. AUSTIN

[*aside*] Damn! [*aloud*] All right.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Thanks awfully, old chap. I say, what ages they take, don't they? [*impatiently. Walks towards window*]

ST. AUSTIN

[*after a moment's thought*] I say, Gore!

SIR ARCHIBALD

Hulloa? [*with back turned, facing window*]

ST. AUSTIN

Suppose she isn't "taking any"?

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*aghast*] What?

ST. AUSTIN

[*sarcastically*] It mayn't have struck you, of course, but it's just possible she mayn't reciprocate.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Oh, rot! [*ingenuously. Turns round*]

ST. AUSTIN

Sure she likes you?

SIR ARCHIBALD

Oh, yes. [*confidentially*] She *likes* me all right. I say [*coming down c.*], you don't think there's any one else, do you?

ST. AUSTIN

[*impatiently*] My dear chap, how on earth do I know?

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*struck by sudden idea*] Happy thought—you might sound her sister.

ST. AUSTIN

No, I'm hanged if I do. [*turns away*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*laughing*] All right, dear boy, keep cool.



Put in a word for me, though, when you get the chance. Hulloa ! [*looks towards door*]  
Here they are.

*Enter Evelyn, followed by Amy L., having made some slight but obvious alteration in their dress. Flowers at belt, &c.*

EVELYN and AMY

How d'you do ?

BOTH MEN

How d'you do ?

EVELYN

[*to Sir Archibald*] I'm so sorry papa's out.  
He had to go to Coombe to the cattle show.

[*St. Austin reluctantly seats himself by Amy on sofa L. Sir Archibald and Evelyn sit R. and L.C.*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*absently looks at Amy*] Yes, he said he would be away to-day—I mean, so sorry we've missed him.

EVELYN

I *hope* he'll be back soon.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Oh, yes, I *hope* so. [*fervently*]

ST. AUSTIN

[*looking at Evelyn, but speaking to Amy*]  
Lucky to find you in on such a fine afternoon.

AMY

Yes ; we were going to play croquet at the Rectory, but Evelyn had a headache.

ST. AUSTIN

[*looks anxiously at Evelyn, who is apparently engrossed in Sir Archibald's conversation*] I'm awfully sorry.

AMY

Oh, it's nothing serious.

[*Sir Archibald looks angrily at St. Austin*]

EVELYN

[*politely to Sir Archibald*] Have you been fishing to-day ?

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*moodily*] Yes—this morning.

EVELYN

I hope you were successful ?

SIR ARCHIBALD

No. No luck at all. [*looking at St. Austin, aside*] Selfish beast !

EVELYN

Really ! how very unfortunate ! But I suppose it's almost *too* fine, such a lovely day.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Beautiful.

EVELYN

We *had* arranged to go for a walk, but Amy didn't feel inclined to. [*slight pause*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

I am particularly sorry not to see the Colonel, as it may be [*raising his voice and looking angrily at St. Austin*] the last opportunity I shall have. I am leaving the day after to-morrow.

ST. AUSTIN

[*returns his glance inquiringly, aside*] What the deuce does he want now?

AMY

Oh, *are* you? [*suddenly confused*] It is getting very dull here, isn't it? We're going to Eastbourne next month.

EVELYN

[*glancing covertly at St. Austin*] I suppose you won't be back this year?

SIR ARCHIBALD

I—I fancy not—that is—it depends on circumstances. [*still fixing St. Austin with eye-glass steadily*]

ST. AUSTIN

[*aside, as if struck by a sudden idea*] That's it, is it? [*quickly to Amy*] What beautiful—ah—orchids you have in your conservatory, Miss Chester! [*looks at conservatory or garden as arranged before*] Such a rich colour. Would you mind showing them to me?

AMY

[*coldly*] Certainly, Mr. St. Austin. [*rises*

*and goes to conservatory, followed by St. Austin]*  
I had no idea you cared for flowers.

ST. AUSTIN

I—I—I'm awfully interested in orchids—  
like yours. Such particularly fine ones.

AMY

*[over her shoulder by conservatory door]* Yes,  
how nice! These happen *[sarcastically]* to be  
hydrangeas.

ST. AUSTIN

*[with alacrity]* Oh, by Jove! So they are.  
How stupid of me! But—but *[Amy pauses at  
door and looks back at him]*, they're awfully  
jolly, too, aren't they?

AMY

*[emphatically]* Oh, yes; awfully. *[goes  
into conservatory, followed by St. Austin; they  
each look anxiously at the other two as they  
do so]*

*[Slight pause.]*

SIR ARCHIBALD

*[fixing eyeglass]* Your sister's looking  
awfully fit—well, I mean; isn't she? *[takes  
up ornament from table]*

EVELYN

*[indifferently]* Yes, she generally has a  
colour.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Always in tremendous form. *[slight pause]*  
Don't you think so? *[nervously]*

EVELYN

[*coldly*] I'm afraid I don't quite understand what "tremendous form" may mean.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*with constrained laugh*] Awfully sorry. I ought to have said "high spirits." That sort of thing, don't you know. [*replaces ornament backwards on table*]

EVELYN

[*quietly turning ornament round in its proper place*] Amy is naturally very easily amused.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Easily amused! I suppose she must be. [*aside*] Confound that ass, St. Austin! Wonder if this one knows anything? [*aloud*] You must be awfully fond of each other?

EVELYN

Oh, we're not sentimental as a family.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Not as a *family*, perhaps, but—— [*stops embarrassed, aside*] Hang it all! [*aloud*] I—I suppose sisters always tell each other everything.

EVELYN

Really! I wasn't aware of it. [*gets up and goes towards music rack L.B.*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*dropping eyeglass, aside*] No go.

EVELYN

[*from L.B.*] I suppose [*in forced voice*] Mr. St. Austin is leaving when you do? [*arranges music*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

Oh, yes. At least he hasn't said anything about it; but I shouldn't think he'd stay on by himself.

EVELYN

Oh, no; of course not. [*hurriedly*] Why should he?

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*aside*] Evidently suspects something in that quarter. I'll sound her. [*aloud*] Unsociable sort of chap, St. Austin.

EVELYN

Indeed!

SIR ARCHIBALD

Yes—not much of a lady's man. Never knows what to say to them.

EVELYN

How unfortunate! [*sarcastically*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

Yes; bit of a drawback to a chap. However [*watching her*], it doesn't matter in his case—he isn't *likely* to want to settle down.

EVELYN

[*disturbed*] Isn't he? [*separates some sheets of music and comes down c.*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*anxiously*] Should *you* think he was a marrying man?

EVELYN

Really, Sir Archibald, I never considered the subject. [*takes up work*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*quickly*] No, no, of course not. [*aside*]  
Rather gave myself away, then.

EVELYN

Will you excuse me if I go on with this?  
[*holds up work*] It's for a bazaar next week.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Oh, certainly—don't mind me. [*aside*]  
How much longer are they going to stay in there? [*looks at conservatory*] Well, as we were saying—let me see, what *were* we talking about?

EVELYN

I'm afraid I've completely forgotten. [*works very fast*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

Odd thing [*laughs*], so have I. [*aside*]  
Mustn't look too keen. Confound that chap!

EVELYN

[*languidly*] Now I come to think of it, I believe you were saying something about Mr. St. Austin, weren't you?

SIR ARCHIBALD

By Jove ! so I was—clever of you to remember. Let me see, where had we got to ?

EVELYN

You said you didn't think he was fond of society.

SIR ARCHIBALD

Oh, yes, of course, that was it [*takes up another ornament and plays with it*] ; and he isn't at all domestic either. No quiet tasks, like——

EVELYN

[*pointedly, looking at conservatory*] He seems very fond of botany.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*hastily, following her glance*] Oh, that's all rot, you know—he doesn't really know a weed from a shrub. [*aside*] What's he doing in there all this time ?

EVELYN

He seems anxious to learn. [*sarcastically*]

*Enter Amy and St. Austin from conservatory, both looking bored. St. Austin looks keenly at Evelyn and Sir Archibald. Amy goes to L.C.*

ST. AUSTIN

[*with forced cheerfulness*] Awfully good show of flowers you have, Miss Chester.



SIR ARCHIBALD

[*with temper, to St. Austin*] So you seem to think.

EVELYN

[*coldly, still working*] It's very kind of you to say so. We have so few things out. By the by, Mr. St. Austin, you forgot your music last time you were here.

ST. AUSTIN

Oh, did I, really?—how stupid of me! I hope it hasn't been in your way.

EVELYN

Oh, not at all. I put it out for you.  
[*going L.*]

ST. AUSTIN

Thanks, awfully.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*looking at Amy, who takes no notice of him*]  
I think I'd like to have a look round the conservatory, too—if I may.

AMY

[*tossing her head*] I've no doubt Evelyn will be *delighted* to show it to you.

EVELYN

[*coldly*] With pleasure. [*leads the way into the conservatory, followed reluctantly by Sir Archibald*].

SIR ARCHIBALD

Thanks so much. [*glances at Amy as he goes, who draws her chair nearer to St. Austin*]

AMY

Are you interested in photographs, Mr. St. Austin?—these views [*taking up album*] are rather good.

ST. AUSTIN

[*obediently holding book*] Very. [*they look at album for a few seconds*]

ST. AUSTIN

I hope your sister's headache is better.

AMY

Oh yes, thanks. I don't think it was ever very alarming.

ST. AUSTIN

She isn't delicate, is she?

AMY

Not in the least.

ST. AUSTIN

I suppose you're great pals?

AMY

Oh, I don't know, we get on pretty well—*generally*.

ST. AUSTIN

You'd miss her awfully, I expect.

AMY

Miss her? [*inquiringly*]

ST. AUSTIN

Yes—if—she—if she went away, you know.

AMY.

She does go away—occasionally.

ST. AUSTIN

Yes, yes, of course ; but I mean *altogether*.

AMY.

That isn't at all likely to happen.

ST. AUSTIN

[*gloomily*] Oh, one never knows. [*they turn over some pages of album in silence, Amy looking up restlessly and fidgeting*] [*suddenly*] Gore's an awfully good chap, when you know him.

AMY

[*brightening up*] Yes !

ST. AUSTIN

Talks a bit too much ; but one soon gets over that.

AMY

Does one really ? How very kind !

ST. AUSTIN

Yes, because he's such a keen sportsman, you know—good all round,

AMY

[*enthusiastically*] I *do* like a man to be like that. Sporting, I mean. [*stops suddenly*]

ST. AUSTIN

You see, he's done a good deal of knocking about up to now ; but [*with an effort*] I think he'd be all right if he was married—to the right person, of course.

AMY

[*disturbed*] Is he going to be married, then ?

ST. AUSTIN

Well, as a matter of fact, you see — [confused] That depends on the lady, doesn't it?

AMY

Oh, entirely. [slight pause] He isn't engaged, then? [anxiously]

ST. AUSTIN

Oh, no. At least, he *wasn't* this morning.

AMY

[aside] Wasn't this morning. [looks at conservatory] He does mean Evelyn! Oh! [suppresses her annoyance but fidgets all the more. With forced smile to St. Austin] But you think he's going to be soon. How awfully amusing!

ST. AUSTIN

Yes, it's rather a joke, isn't it? [both laugh in constrained way]

*Re-enter from conservatory Evelyn and Sir Archibald.*

EVELYN

[as if continuing conversation] So we're getting some more ferns sent in.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[absently] Oh, yes. I say, St. Austin, we ought to be going—it's nearly five. [looks at clock]

ST. AUSTIN

[getting up] Yes.

EVELYN

Oh, you *must* have tea, it's just coming;  
and that clock's more than ten minutes  
fast. [B.]

SIR ARCHIBALD

Thank you. We seem to have inflicted  
ourselves upon you for so long already. [*sits  
down*]

EVELYN

Not at all. Amy, we might have tea in  
the summer-house. Tell Susan to bring it  
there. [*Exit Amy R.*]

ST. AUSTIN

That'll be awfully jolly—quite Arcadian.

EVELYN

[*laughing*] I'm afraid it may be rather  
earwiggy. Oh, [*aside, suddenly*] I wonder  
if the cream has come? [*aloud*] Excuse me  
one moment. [*Exit quickly R.*]

[*Sir Archibald gets up and jaces St. Austin.*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*angrily*] I must congratulate you on your  
subtle sense of humour, though I must say the  
point of the joke seems somewhat obscure.

ST. AUSTIN

What on earth do you mean? I've been  
backing you up all the afternoon as you asked  
me to.

SIR ARCHIBALD

The deuce you have! Odd way you've got of doing it. [*both glare at each other*]

ST. AUSTIN

Why, you told me yourself to talk to the other one.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*getting more enraged*] Then why the devil didn't you do it?

ST. AUSTIN

What the — [*checking himself*] My dear chap, you don't know what you're talking about. [*soothingly*] Naturally you're rather excited. By the by, am I to congratulate you?

SIR ARCHIBALD

Don't be an ass! [*turns his back and examines the opposite wall*]

ST. AUSTIN

Well, I'm sure you had plenty of time to improve the occasion while I was in that confounded conservatory.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*turning round*] That's just it. Who asked you to go into that confounded conservatory and——

ST. AUSTIN

Why, you did, of course.

SIR ARCHIBALD

I?

ST. AUSTIN

Yes, at least you said you wanted to be left alone with her.

SIR ARCHIBALD

But I didn't want to be left alone with the *wrong girl*.

ST. AUSTIN

The *wrong girl*. [*light breaks slowly over him*] You don't mean to say you meant the younger Miss Chester?

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*impatiently*] Yes, of course I did—Amy.

ST. AUSTIN

Great Scot, why didn't you say so, then?

SIR ARCHIBALD

I thought I had—anyway, it was perfectly obvious to any one of ordinary intelligence.

ST. AUSTIN

Well, I didn't know.

SIR ARCHIBALD

No, of course [*crushingly*], *you* wouldn't. A nice mull you've made of it.

ST. AUSTIN

[*cheerfully*] Awfully sorry, old chap, but there's no great harm done. [*slaps him on the back*] Go in and win. I'll talk to the right one *this* time.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*sarcastically*] Exceedingly kind of you, but unfortunately it's rather late in the day.

ST. AUSTIN

Not a bit, my dear boy, not a bit. Tell you what. I don't mind going in there again with Miss Evelyn Chester.

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*hastily*] Oh no, don't trouble to do that, I'll go myself with—Amy.

*Re-enter Evelyn and Amy R.*

EVELYN

Tea will be ready in a few minutes. Will you come out into the garden?

SIR ARCHIBALD

Delighted, but [*nervously to Amy*] I rather want to have another look at that plumbago. We haven't any at home like it. Would you [*desperately*] be so very kind as to show it to me?

AMY

[*confused*] Oh, yes, certainly. Fancy you're not having any! [*leads the way into conservatory*]

SIR ARCHIBALD

[*aside at conservatory door*] I'll do it this time. [*follows her into conservatory*]

EVELYN

[*to St. Austin*] Shall we go too, Mr. St. Austin, as you're so interested in orchids? [*turns, as if to follow*]



ST. AUSTIN

Wait a minute. I want to speak to you particularly. [*Evelyn comes back slowly R.C.*] Fact is [*with great effort*] I don't think they want us ; and I'm sure—[*comes nearer*] we—that is, *I* don't want them.

EVELYN

[*looks down*] Don't you ?

CURTAIN.



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